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THE LOVE of the SACRED HEART

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART

A SERIES FOR SPECIAL SPIRITUAL READING

I.

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART.
Illustrated by St. MARGARET MARY and the Blessed JOHN EUDES.

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II.

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART.
Illustrated by St. GERTRUDE.

III.

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART.
Illustrated by St. MECHTILDE.

In preparation.

The Love of the Sacred Heart

Illustrated by
ST. GERTRUDE

With a Preface by the
MOST REV. ALBAN GOODIER, S.J.
Archbishop of Bombay

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PREFACE

IT is the rule with all students of the sciences, but especially with historical students, that before venturing on new theories of their own they should first become acquainted with what has been said and thought upon their subject by others. By so doing many good results are secured: much useless labour is saved, for often it is found that what we thought was new has been expressed long since; much useful wisdom is gathered up, for perhaps we are too impatient to utter our own teaching without realizing the great things that others have said; lastly, a greater continuity of thought, of mind, and of heart, is maintained, for it is futile, if not a little arrogant, to suppose that we can for ever be striking out new paths, ignoring the explorations of those who have gone before us.

The deeper we ourselves dig down, the more shall we respect and study the efforts of others who have worked in the same mine. Where they have succeeded we can the more easily follow; where they have failed, or seem to us to have failed, or where their methods do not appeal to us, we can learn better ways and hope for better results.

Hence it is not to be wondered at that modern books of devotion tend more and more to the historical method. The deeper down a devotion sinks into a soul, or into a generation of mankind, the less it is content with a mere surface expression of itself, with words only, however beautiful; the more it craves, even if unconsciously, to link itself up with the minds of all time that have been kindled with the same fire. Our own words fall short of all we would say; our own imagination does not suffice to satisfy our demand for the vision of the truth; we stretch out to the great ones of old, to the saints and masters of the past. When we find in ourselves an echo

of their voices, a reflection of their light, we are delighted and encouraged; when we are able by their words to "raise our minds and hearts to God," we are confident that our devotion is akin to theirs.

In no field of spiritual labour has this historical tendency been more marked of late years than in the devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is true that we owe the devotion, as we now have it, to St. Margaret Mary and the revelations she received; nevertheless, it is also true that the Sacred Heart of Jesus, even as a special object of worship, was known to many saints and mystics, and by them openly preached, long before her time. The very Feast of the Sacred Heart had already been instituted through Blessed John Eudes when she first began her campaign. All this does but rejoice the follower of the Sacred Heart the more; for it shows him that this devotion is no novel, upstart thing, but has been natural to the believer from the beginning, and that here as elsewhere, for all its comparative newness, he can find communion with the saints, be enlightened by their teaching and moved by their words, as much as in the devotions that are the very oldest.

Among these retrospects it is but natural and obvious that the lover of the Sacred Heart should dwell upon St. Gertrude. The *Revelations* of St. Gertrude, and still more her book of *Prayers*, have always been popular in the Church; the latter may take rank for popularity with the *Imitation of Christ* or the *Paradisus Animæ*. And the note that rings through all her writings is the love of Jesus Christ for the individual soul: the joy He finds in this, the lavishness with which He pours it out, the way He solves the mystery of human suffering, the reward He provides, even in this life, for anyone who will give Him love for love. St. Gertrude may be said to have brought nearer together heaven and earth than any other mystic, so easily does she seem to pass from one to the

other, to converse with the Saints and with our Lord Himself, as with members of her own community.

This is, therefore, only another aspect of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is true it differs somewhat from that of St. Margaret Mary; while the latter is more apostolic, more a devotion of reparation and atonement, more demonstrative of the pain of the Heart that is wounded and broken, that of St. Gertrude draws us on by its intimacy, its loving fondness, its lavish promises, its gladness of union. Still, both alike have the same theme, and take their inspiration from the same source; nowhere do they contradict one another; rather they supplement each other, even as all love manifested is a source at once of joy and sorrow; even as every scene in our Lord's own life is at once a joyful and a sorrowful mystery.

The compiler of this volume has obviously performed a labour of love. The method has been simple; it has merely been a rearranging of the Revelations of the Saint, adding in such adaptations to the Sacred Heart as seemed natural; one might say the author has been using the words of St. Gertrude as material for prayer, for "raising the mind and heart to God," keeping the Sacred Heart in view as a goal. One can look at the result and feel sure that there will be many who will find in it much that will appeal to their sense of devotion. The writings of mystics are not always clear; those of St. Gertrude may at times seem little more than plays of fancy; but a work of this kind would seem to eliminate much that less suits our own generation, at the same time as it unites and gives point to much that might otherwise be vague.

ALBAN GOODIER, S.J.
Archbishop of Bombay.

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The Love of the Sacred Heart

CHAPTER I

THE SAINT'S DEDICATION TO OUR LORD

BEHOLD, O loving Lord, the talent which Thy condescending goodness has confided to the vilest and most unworthy of Thy creatures. I use it from love of Thy great love, from a desire to promote Thy glory, both by this writing and by any others I may in future undertake. I have full confidence, and in saying this I dare to count upon Thy grace, since I have never said or written anything on any subject unless I knew it to be Thy will, desirous as I am of Thy glory and the good of souls. I call on Thee, therefore, to witness that I desire to praise Thee, to return thanks to Thee for Thy boundless tenderness, which has not been withheld from me, though so unworthy.

I wish all to praise Thee. May many be found who, on reading these lines, may taste the sweetness of Thy love, and, being drawn thereby, enjoy greater delights in their soul. According to Thy faithful promise and the holy desire which urges me, deign to give to all, who in humility shall read these lines, the grace to praise Thee for Thy condescension, and for Thy compassion for my unworthiness. May they be filled with compunction and a desire of their own advancement. Grant that from these hearts, like golden thuribles, full of charity, so sweet a perfume may arise unto Thee as to compensate greatly for my ingratitude and negligence.

CHAPTER II

COMPOSITION OF THE SECOND BOOK OF THE REVELATIONS

THIS dedication reveals to us the heart of St. Gertrude. Whether she wrote herself or dictated to her Sisters, she sought only the glory of God and the salvation of souls. She had composed a certain number of books of prayers, of which only one has come down to us, her *Spiritual Exercises*. Their beauty makes us bitterly regret the loss of the others.

The great work of St. Gertrude, containing her revelations, has for title either *The Insinuations of Divine Piety* or *The Herald of Divine Love*.

Like St. Mechtilde's book, it contains the history of its composition, and recommends itself to us by its very simplicity. It was written at different times. The first part was composed about eight years after receiving the graces it recounts, and the second part twenty years later.

St. Gertrude received her revelations on the 27th of January, 1281, and it was not until the night of Good Friday, the 25th of March, 1289, that, urged by a divine inspiration, she took the style hanging at her side, and began her work. She only wrote five chapters, and, overcome by the repugnance she experienced, she interrupted her labours. But our Lord pressed her continually to continue, and on the 14th of September of the same year, 1289, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, He said to her.

"Thou mayst be certain that thou shalt not leave the prison of thy flesh until thou hast paid to the last farthing the debt thou dost now neglect. I wish to have, in thy writing, an indisputable witness of My divine tenderness in these latter times, wherein I design to do much good to souls."

"I was quite overwhelmed," says St. Gertrude, "and I began to consider how difficult it would be, or rather, impossible, to find words in which to make men understand what had been so often said to me, without causing scandal."

Our Lord then showered down on her soul an abundant rain, the impetuous fall of which weighed her down like a young and tender plant, instead of watering her gently, and she found no profit from it except the understanding of some weighty words which were above human understanding.

Our Lord then comforted her with His accustomed sweetness and strengthened her soul by these words: "Since this outpouring of grace seems useless to thee, I will hold thee close to My divine Heart, I will fill thee many times with My meekness and sweetness in as far as thou canst bear it." And Gertrude resumed her labours.

"I attest, Lord, how faithful Thou wert to Thy promise. For four days, at the most convenient time, Thou hast inspired me in some part of this work with so much wealth and ease that I wrote without fatigue, even remembering things I had not before thought of. Thou didst so well regulate the work that, after having written a certain portion, which Thou didst consider sufficient, I could not, with all my efforts, write one word more, yet on the following day I was able to write very fully and with no difficulty. In this way Thou didst instruct and moderate my natural eagerness, according as we are taught that we should at no time be so eager to work as to neglect contemplation."

CHAPTER III

THE BOOK IS FINISHED AND IS APPROVED BY OUR LORD

IN this way was composed the second book of St. Gertrude's *Revelations*, the only one written by herself. The other books were written by one of her Sisters at her dictation, and the work accomplished towards the year 1301—that is, twenty years after receiving the revelations. And at each period, as we said in the Prologue, our Lord deigned to say He accepted equally both parts of the work.

And so, when the first part was written, Gertrude offered it humbly and devoutly to our Lord. In His extreme goodness He replied: " If anyone with a pure intention should read this book in order to make progress in the spiritual life I will draw him strongly to Myself; it will seem as though I held the book in My hands and associated him with Myself. When two people read a book together the one feels the breath of the other; in the same way I will assimilate the breath of his desires, which will powerfully move My mercy in his favour. I will also make him participate in the breath of My Divinity, and My Spirit will renew the life of his soul. Our Lord also said: " He who, with the same intention, shall copy this book shall, at each stroke of the pen, receive an increase of love which I will send him from My heart, causing in his soul delicious feelings of divine sweetness."

During the composition of the second part of the book, Gertrude complained tenderly one night to our Lord, who, with other things, said to her: " I have given thee to be a light to the nations, and to be My salvation to the ends of the earth " (Isa. xlix. 66). And as she understood these words referred to her book, which was then barely

begun, she cried out, quite astonished: "But, my Lord, how can this little book give any useful light, as I do not wish any more written, and I will never allow what is written to be published?" Our Lord replied: "When I chose Jeremias to be a prophet, he found himself unable to speak, or to have any necessary capabilities; and yet by his mouth I reproved kings and peoples. In the same way, those I have resolved to enlighten by thy means in the way of knowledge and truth shall not be defrauded. No one can prevent what I have eternally predestinated, but those I have predestinated I have called, and those I have called I will sanctify in the way I please."

Another time, while praying, she made great efforts to obtain from our Lord the permission to stop the person who was writing this book, as Superiors did not actually require it. Our Lord said to her kindly: "Dost thou not know that he who is urged to do something by My will is more inclined to it than by obedience? Well thou knowest that it is My will that this book be written, therefore why dost thou trouble thyself? It is I who urge her who writes; I will faithfully continue to help her, and I can keep from harm what is My own."

At last, conforming her will to that of God, Gertrude said to our Lord: "My beloved Lord, what title wilt Thou have given to this book?" Our Lord replied: "This My book shall be called *The Herald of Divine Love*, for in it shall be tasted in advance something of the plenitude of My divine love."

Full of admiration, she replied: "The persons who receive the title of Herald are invested with great authority; what power wilt Thou give to the book Thou dost honour with this title?" Our Lord replied: "He who reads it with faith, humble devotion, pious gratitude, and seeking edification, shall receive from My divine liberality remission of his venial sins, spiritual consolation, and also the requisite dispositions to receive still greater graces.

And so our Lord Himself superintended the composition of the book. When finished He deigned to give it a double approbation, one to St. Gertrude herself, and the other to her who had written it.

Jesus appeared to St. Gertrude clasping the book to His heart, and said to her: "I clasp this book firmly to My breast, that all its words may be impregnated with the sweetness of my divinity, just as the sweetest mead impregnates a mouthful of bread made with the finest flour. He who, for My glory, shall read this book with humble devotion, shall obtain from it as fruit, eternal salvation."

Gertrude begged that for His honour and glory He would preserve this book from all error. Our Lord then made the sign of the cross over it, saying: "As at Mass, where I work the miracle of transubstantiation for the salvation of all men, so in this moment, by My heavenly blessing, I sanctify all that is written in this book for the salvation of all those who shall read it with humble devotion." Our Lord continued: "The work of the person who has written this book is as pleasing to Me as though she had brought Me as many packets of scent as she has formed letters. Three things therein please Me very specially: (1) I find the sweetness of divine love the source of all that is written; (2) I perceive the sweet scent of a good-will, with which she has written; (3) I delight in recognizing My gratuitous goodness, shown in every page of this book. The same love which caused Me to inspire thee with what is written in this book has led Me to impress it all on the memory of her to whom thou didst communicate it. She has thus collected and placed all in order, disposing herself to write it according to My adorable will. So I will that this book should have My holy life and conversation as cover, that it should be ornamented with the ruby jewels of My five wounds, and that it should be sealed by My divine goodness with

seven seals, the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that no one may ever be able to tear it from My hands."

The religious who composed this book, in going to Holy Communion, carried it hidden in her sleeve to offer it to our Lord as an eternal praise. No one knew of it as she knelt, according to custom, and prostrated herself before the body of our Lord. Another religious saw our Lord, in the impatience of his infinite love, come forward to meet her with joy, and embrace her tenderly, while she was kneeling. He said to her: " I will infuse with the sweetness of My divine love and make fruitful all the words of this book now offered to Me, which has been really written under the inspiration of My Spirit. Whoever comes to Me with a humble heart, wishing to read it for love of My love, I will receive as a mother takes her child to her heart. I will show him, as with My finger, the parts most useful to him. Even more, I will tenderly lean over him, and as a person who has in his mouth a sweet scent perfumes with his breath the one he embraces, so I with the breath of My divinity will intimately penetrate this person for the salvation of his soul."

Lord Jesus, now is the time to keep Thy promise. Indicate with Thy finger the passages that will cause Thy Heart to be better known. May Thy divine hands collect, arrange, and place all in order in the way that is most pleasing to Thee. Penetrate with the sweetness of Thy love and fructify with Thy all-powerful breath every page of this book.

CHAPTER IV

ST. GERTRUDE'S CHILDHOOD

AN old historian says that in this blessed child the fruit seemed to appear before the flower; her first steps crushed the vanities of the world, and the first recognition of it was an eternal adieu. At the age of five years Gertrude entered the monastery of Helfta, in the year 1261. She was born on the 6th of January, 1256.

The Abbess who received her was likewise named Gertrude. Through this coincidence several historians have confounded Gertrude the Abbess with St. Gertrude, named the Great, Authoress of the *Herald of Divine Love*.

In consequence a great many mistakes have arisen. For instance, contrary to what many have said, St. Gertrude was not St. Mechtilde's sister, nor did she belong to the family of Hackborn. She was never Abbess and had probably no office in the monastery; when her friend St. Mechtilde was ill, she simply replaced her as chanter. The long life attributed to St. Gertrude would be the total of her years and those of her Abbess. The truth is that St. Gertrude, born in 1256, died in 1302, at forty-six years of age.

The religious life of St. Gertrude is better known. The first book of the *Herald of Divine Love* is entirely consecrated to a "Recommendation of the person." Gertrude needed a recommendation. She announced herself as coming from Sinai. She carried the secrets of the divine Heart. She prophesied coming events, and declared she had received a providential mission in the Church of God. Such privileges must be specially proved by a holy life. For this reason, after Gertrude's death, the religious of Helfta wrote in her praise and

placed this account of her at the head of her *Revelations*. By it we learn to know the Friend of the Sacred Heart. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom. xi. 33).

By secret and marvellous ways He calls those He has predestined; He justifies them by His free gifts, and His justice fills them with His graces; He treats them as though they had been found fully worthy of all His riches and favours. This was seen in Gertrude, His elect, for like a pure lily He placed her by His grace among the sweetest flowers of the garden of the Church.

While quite a little child of five years He withdrew her from all the turmoil of the world and hid her in the shelter of the religious life. By endless graces He added to the whiteness of her soul the colours of the most beautiful flowers, making her pleasing to all, so that she gained all hearts. Although of tender years, she yet was of ripe reason, amiable, clever, and spoke well; she understood so well the teaching she received that all, on hearing her, were filled with admiration.

When she was received into the school (of which St. Mechtilde was mistress) she was distinguished by her prompt submission and by her rare intelligence, so that she soon outdistanced in learning and wisdom both those of her own age and her other companions. The years of childhood and youth were remarkable in Gertrude for a pure heart and a mind devoted to learning. She was preserved by the God of mercy from numberless frivolities, the ordinary danger of souls at that age. Let us render to God praise and infinite thanks.

When it seemed good to Him who had conducted her so early to take her place at the sacred banquet of the monastic life, He called her also by His grace from the exterior to the interior life, and from temporal lessons

to the study of spiritual things. By an express revelation He operated this change. Gertrude then recognized that she had remained far from God, and not laboured to resemble Him. Until then, by too great an application to secular studies, she had neglected to fix the eye of her soul on the light of spiritual science, and by too great attachment to human learning she was deprived of the ineffable happiness of tasting spiritual wisdom.

From this moment all exterior things only filled her with contempt, and this was only what might be expected, for our Lord had introduced her into the abode of joy and gladness on Mount Sion, even the contemplation of Himself. There " He stripped her of the old man and his deeds and clothed her with the New Man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."

CHAPTER V

ST. GERTRUDE'S CONVERSION

GERTRUDE received the first revelation from our Lord on the 27th of January, 1281, and henceforth her life, already so edifying, was completely transformed. The Sacred Heart drew to Himself all the thoughts of her mind and all the affections of her heart.

Gertrude herself describes this vision, which was for her what the vision on the road to Damascus was for St. Paul. She mentions it twice; once to describe it, and afterwards to render thanks to God for it. We will unite the two passages into one.

"May my soul bless Thee, O Lord God, my Creator; may my soul bless Thee, and from the depths of my heart may it publish the mercies which Thy infinite tenderness hath so gratuitously showered down on me, O my Jesus, who hast loved me so tenderly. . . . I render thanks as much as I can to Thy immense mercy, and with it I praise the inexhaustible patience which caused Thee to close Thine eyes to the years of my childhood, youth, and more advanced age.

"I passed them in great blindness and folly. If Thou hadst not preserved me by the natural horror I had of evil and the pleasure I found in good or by the reproaches I received from those around me, I should have committed in thought, word or act, without remorse of conscience, at least so it seems to me now, whatever evil presented itself. I lived as a pagan amongst pagans. I acted as though I never understood, O my God, that Thou dost reward good and punish evil. And yet from my infancy, from my fifth year, Thou hast chosen me to dwell amongst Thy faithful friends in a religious house, there to prepare myself for Thee.

" Thou didst begin Thy work during Advent. On the following Epiphany I should attain the age of twenty-six. Thou didst then excite in me much trouble, which so changed my heart that in future I only felt disgust for the foolish thoughts of my youth. This trouble was destined to destroy all the vanity and curiosity raised by my pride, and in this way Thou didst, to a certain extent, prepare my heart to receive Thee.

" Shortly after this came my twenty-sixth birthday. The Monday preceding the Feast of the Purification (27th of January, 1281), in the calm of the evening, after Compline, I was in the middle of the dormitory, and it was the time chosen by Thee to appease the trouble Thou hadst raised in my heart for the last month. According to the observances of the Order, I bowed my head to an old religious passing, when, raising my head, I saw standing before me a young man with a delicate, beautiful face, seemingly about sixteen years of age. With an engaging manner and gentle words He said to me: ' Thy salvation is near. Why dost thou wear thyself out with grief? Thou hast not had good counsel, for sorrow to have so changed thee.'

" When He said these words I knew quite well I was in the middle of the dormitory, and yet it seemed to me that I was in the choir in the corner where I am accustomed to make my tepid meditation, and there I heard Him say: ' I will save and deliver thee; be not afraid.' When He ceased speaking I saw His tender and delicate hand take my right hand, as though to confirm His promise. Then He added: ' Thou hast been reduced to lick the earth with My enemies, and to suck some drops of honey from among the thorns. Return now to Me, and I will inebriate thee with the torrent of My divine joy.' "

But suddenly, between our Lord and St. Gertrude there appeared a hedge full of thorns, so long that she could not see the end of it and could see no way of reaching Him.

" At this sight I remained hesitating and sad, because of my desire. I was on the point of fainting, when Jesus took me and, raising me without the smallest difficulty, placed me at His side. And I, looking on the hand given me as a pledge, recognized the precious jewels of those holy wounds which had effaced the writing of man's condemnation.

" I praise, adore, bless and thank, with all my power, Thy wise mercy and Thy merciful wisdom! O my Creator and Redeemer, Thou strivest to bend my proud head under Thy sweet yoke, preparing for me a remedy so suitable to my weakness. . . . From that moment, in the sweet odour of Thy perfume, my soul regained its calm and serenity, and I began to find Thy yoke sweet and Thy burden light, which before I had thought insupportable."

CHAPTER VI

THE INTELLECTUAL TRANSFORMATION OF ST. GERTRUDE

THE first result of this vision was to create in St. Gertrude a great loathing for secular studies, and to turn her entirely to the meditation of the Holy Scriptures. May God be praised, for the monastery of Helfta and the entire Church have been thereby enriched with great treasures.

From being a grammarian, Gertrude became a theologian. She began to revolve in her mind, without ever being tired, all the pages of the holy books she could procure; she filled her heart with the most useful and sweetest sentences of Holy Scripture, and so always had words of edification on her lips. In this way she satisfied all those who came to consult her, and confounded error by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which she quoted so aptly as to leave nothing to reply. Neither could she, in those days, be satisfied with the marvellous sweetness and delight which she found in contemplation and in the study of the Sacred Scriptures. This occupation was like honey in her mouth, a ravishing melody in her ears, and a spiritual jubilation in her heart.

In the hope of explaining and making clear certain obscure passages to some minds less enlightened than her own, she wrote several books full of the greatest sweetness and drawn from the writings of the Saints. She had gathered them together as the dove gathers the grains of wheat. She wrote them to benefit all who chose to read them. She also wrote beautiful prayers and spiritual exercises calculated to help souls. Her style is so suitable to the subject that masters, far from finding anything to correct, take pleasure in the composition,

throughout which are mingled most appropriate texts of Scripture, so that neither theologians nor devout souls are wearied.

She was indeed a strong pillar to religion. She defended justice and truth courageously, and it could be said of her as it is said in the Book of Wisdom: "She sustained her home." Her advice and example have encouraged very many souls in the practice of real piety. Her language was sweet and convincing, persuasive, and so pleasant that many, after hearing her, gave testimony to the Spirit of God dwelling within her, as their hearts had been touched and their wills changed.

And truly the efficacious and life-giving words, which penetrate better than a two-edged sword, lived in her and worked wonders. In some her words inspired compunction of heart and a desire to work at their own salvation; others found in her light to know God and their own defects; some received from her the happiness of a sweet consolation, and others found their hearts inflamed with an ardent love for God. Many people from outside, who had only spoken with her once, said they had experienced great consolation. But though in these and other ways she pleased men, we must not believe that what we are going to read of came from the subtlety of her mind or of her imagination. Neither must we attribute it to the cleverness of her manner nor to the care with which she expressed herself. God forbid! We must understand well and without hesitation that all came from divine Wisdom. It was a gratuitous gift from the Spirit of God, who blows where He wills, when He wills, upon whom He wills, and what He wills.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHANGE IN ST. GERTRUDE'S HEART

OUR Lord wished to adorn His beloved spouse with gifts of the mind, but He was more anxious to beautify her with the virtues of His Sacred Heart, for which reason He constantly urged her to labour zealously for the perfection of her soul. He rewarded her with extraordinary graces, and so excited her to further efforts. This is the chronological order in which graces were granted to St. Gertrude:

The growing illumination of her heart.
The permanent dwelling of Jesus in her soul.
The impression in her soul of the wounds of Jesus.
The piercing of her heart.
The arrival of the Infant Jesus in her heart.

The illumination of St. Gertrude's heart was the consequence of the vision which occurred on the 27th of January, 1281, but the light only increased in proportion to the Saint's efforts.

"I salute Thee, my Salvation and Light of my soul. May the heavens, the earth, and the abyss, express my gratitude for this new grace. Thou didst invite me to the knowledge and consideration of the interior of my heart, for which I, so far, had felt as little concern, so to speak, as for the interior of my feet. But from the time I began to be concerned about it, I discovered more than one hidden fold in my heart which displeased Thy infinite purity, and I found all the remainder in such confusion and disorder, that notwithstanding Thy willingness to dwell there, Thou couldst not find a corner in which to rest. And yet neither this disorder nor my unworthiness, Jesus, my Well-Beloved, hindered Thee from favouring

me with Thy visible presence each time that I received the vivifying nourishment of Thy Body and Blood. I did not, indeed, see Thee more clearly than objects are seen at the dawn of day, but by Thy sweet condescension Thou didst attract my soul to a more intimate union with Thee, to a more close contemplation and enjoyment, free from fear.

"As I tried to obtain these graces, on the eve of the Feast of the Annunciation (24th of March, 1281), before being invoked Thou saidst, 'Behold I am here,' and Thou didst visit me and fill me, notwithstanding my unworthiness, with the sweetness of Thy graces. I cannot find words in which to express the way in which Thou, the true Sun which breaks forth from the darkness of the night, didst visit me with Thy great and sweet mercy. Grant me, therefore, O Giver of all great gifts, grant me to sacrifice the host of jubilation on the altar of my heart, so that, according to my desires, I and all Thy elect may experience this hitherto unknown sweet oneness and unitive sweetness.

"Thou didst give me then a more enlightened knowledge of Thee, and through this I felt myself more and more drawn to that delicious affection reserved for Thy friends, an effect which could never have been produced by the most severe punishments that I had well deserved. I do not, however, remember having experienced this great consolation excepting when Thou didst invite me to Thy royal banquet."

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERMANENT DWELLING OF JESUS IN GERTRUDE'S HEART

THE heart of Gertrude was ready, and according to the expression of Holy Church our Lord was going to choose it as a delightful dwelling-place. "Thou didst act in this way towards me," writes St. Gertrude, "in this way Thou didst stir up my soul! One day between Easter and Ascension, before Prime, I went to the courtyard and sat down near the fountain. I was charmed with the beauty of the place; a clear water was flowing, trees full of leaf were all around, and among other birds doves flew about in perfect freedom; and I found a particular delight in the place. By Thy inspiration Thou didst make me understand that, like the water in the fountain, I should always allow Thy graces to lead me up to Thee, always showing myself justly grateful; that like the trees I should grow, and by the practice of virtues bring forth good works; also that, despising earthly things, I should, like the doves, fly freely towards heavenly things, breaking away from the tumult of exterior occupations, and, in a word, devote myself to Thee alone with my whole soul. Then my heart would be an agreeable abode for Thee.

"All day my mind was full of these thoughts; at night before retiring I knelt down to pray, when suddenly this passage of Holy Scripture came to my mind: 'If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). My heart of clay felt intimately then that Thou didst enter into it. Would to God a thousand times that I could make the sea turn into blood and pass over my head to inundate my exceeding

wretchedness that Thou, O God of incomprehensible majesty, hadst chosen for Thy dwelling-place! Oh, how I wished to see, for a moment, my heart torn from my body and cast into a furnace, so as to melt and purify all its dross. Even were it not then a fit dwelling-place for Thee, it would at least be less unworthy.

"From that day, my God, Thou didst show Thyself to me, sometimes with indulgence and sometimes with severity, according as I was vigilant or careless in correcting my life. I might even allow my heart to wander away and delight in passing things; and after hours, days, and, alas! I fear, entire weeks passed thus, in returning to my heart I found Thee always the same. Neither can I complain that Thou wert hidden from me, even for a second, from that time up to the present, nearly nine years now.

"I only except once during eleven days, before the Feast of St. John Baptist. That came, it seems to me, from a worldly conversation which took place on a Thursday; and this state lasted until Monday, the eve of St. John the Baptist's feast, during Mass.

"Thy sweet humility and the marvellous goodness of Thy wonderful charity saw well that I had come to that excess of folly that I scarcely perceived the loss of so great a treasure. I do not remember even to have felt any sorrow, nor to have expressed the least desire for the return of so great a grace. I am still surprised at the foolishness which had taken possession of my mind, unless Thou didst wish me to experience in myself what St. Bernard says: 'When we fly, Thou dost pursue us; if we turn our backs on Thee, Thou dost meet us face to face; Thou dost supplicate and art despised, but neither insult nor contempt can make Thee leave us. Without tiring, Thou dost always labour to draw us to that joy, which the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.'

"Thou didst restore to me the joy of Thy blessed presence, and Thou hast guarded for me this great gift. For this grace I offer to Thee Thy very holy prayer during Thine agony, as insistent as Thy anguish was extreme, which is attested by Thy sweat of Blood. By the simplicity and purity of Thy life Thy prayer was rendered very fervent, and the burning love of Thy divinity made it most efficacious. By the merit of this holy prayer, deign to renew my union with Thyself and draw me closely to Thee. Whenever, in order to be useful, I occupy myself with exterior things, grant that I may not forget Thy presence, and when, in the best possible manner and in Thy honour, the work is finished, grant that as a river, kept back for a time by some obstacle, rushes with greater speed on its way, so I may return to Thee.

"Mayst Thou in future find me as zealous for Thy glory as Thou art near to assist me; and for this reason raise me to such a height of perfection as Thy justice allows Thy mercy to elevate a soul so carnal and rebellious as mine. May I also, at last, breathe out my last sigh in Thy arms and sweet embrace. May my soul speedily find itself there, where Thou livest eternally in glory, with the Father and Holy Spirit. Amen."

CHAPTER IX

THE IMPRESSION OF THE HOLY WOUNDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

ONE of the favours granted to St. Gertrude was the impression on her heart of the adorable wounds of Jesus. She relates the fact in this way:

"After Thou didst commence to grant me so great graces, in the first year or perhaps in the second, during the winter I found in a book a little prayer. These were the words: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, grant that I may sigh for Thee with all my heart, with all my desires, with all my soul athirst for Thee; to breathe only in Thee, sweetest and dearest of Friends, and to pant after Thee only, my true blessedness. Imprint, O merciful Lord, with Thy Precious Blood, Thy sacred wounds on my heart, that I may read therein Thy sorrows and Thy love. May the memory of Thy wounds remain for ever engraven on my heart; may it fill me with Thy holy love. Grant also that creatures may henceforth be nothing to me, and that my heart may delight in Thee alone.'

"I made this prayer my own, and found great pleasure in often reciting it. And Thou, who dost never reject the humble, Thou didst listen, quite ready to grant the grace asked for in this little prayer, and very soon after, in the same winter, I was seated in the refectory after Vespers, listening to the Conferences of the Fathers, my soul sweetly occupied with the thought of my nothingness and with the riches of Thy grace, when quite suddenly I felt given to me, I dare to say it, from Thy divine hand, to me so unworthy, the favours I had asked for some time by this prayer. I realized in my mind that Thou hadst imprinted on my heart in particular places the marks of

Thy adorable and very holy wounds. By these wounds Thou hadst healed my soul and made me drink of the delicious cup of Thy love. But my unworthiness did not exhaust by this favour the depths of Thy tenderness. I received also, so great and prodigal is Thy liberality, another great favour; it was to be assured that, on whatever day or time my thoughts should dwell on these great tokens of Thy love, I should obtain some special favour without having to complain of a refusal.

"Besides these graces, Thou didst grant me what I also asked in this prayer—viz., to read in Thy wounds Thy sorrow and Thy love. Alas! it was only for a short time! I do not accuse Thee of having deprived me of this, but I deplore having by my ingratitude and carelessness lost this favour. At the same time Thy immense mercy and generous tenderness forgave me, and the first of these favours, which was also the greatest, remains with me to this present time, but certainly without any merit on my part. To Thee only be honour, dominion, praise, and joy throughout eternity."

CHAPTER X

THE PIERCING OF ST. GERTRUDE'S HEART, OR THE WOUND OF LOVE

THE second favour, precious in the esteem of St. Gertrude, was the piercing of her heart, or the wound of love, which she received during the Advent of 1288.

"After these events, in the seventh year when Advent was nigh, I received from Thee, the Author of all good, a great grace. I had begged a person to add to the prayers she said each day before the crucifix these words for my intention: 'By Thy pierced Heart, most loving Lord, pierce the heart of Gertrude with the darts of Thy love, so that nothing earthly may be found in it, but that it may be completely filled with Thy powerful grace.'

"Touched, I think, by this prayer, on the Sunday *Gaudete* Thou didst inspire me, at the very moment that I was receiving Thy precious Body and Blood with a desire which forced me to cry out: 'Lord, I acknowledge that according to my merits I do not deserve to receive the very least of Thy graces, but because of the merits and desires of those here present I supplicate Thy goodness to pierce my heart with the flame of Thy Love.'

"I felt at once that these words had touched Thy Heart, as much by the increase of grace I felt in my soul as by a sign I saw on the crucifix. So after having received the Sacrament of life and returned to my place to pray, I seemed to see from the crucifix painted on the rood-screen a ray of light coming from the wound in the side as sharp as an arrow. It came out visibly, then re-entered, and at last was sent forth.

"For some time our Lord drew all my love sweetly to Himself. My desires were not, however, fully satisfied

until the following Wednesday, the day on which the faithful honour the goodness Thou didst show in Thy adorable Incarnation and Annunciation. I also was meditating on this mystery, though not with the devotion of others, when, behold, Thou didst appear before me suddenly and didst wound my heart, saying these words: 'In this wound all thy affections must unite, all, with no exception; pleasure, hope, joy, sorrow, fear, and every other affection of thy soul, must centre in My love.'

"Wounds must be cared for. They must be washed, salves applied, and bandaged. Thou didst not teach me how I was to tend mine. A soul stronger than mine, whose hearing was more delicate, alas! than mine to hear the whisper of Thy love, gave me light. I was to honour by a constant devotion the love of Thy Heart while hanging on the cross, to draw from the source of charity which this ineffable love had produced the water of true piety to cleanse me from all my sins, to take the oil of mercy which flows from Thy goodness and arises from Thy marvellous love as a remedy against all adversity. Also, in Thy efficacious charity, produced by Thy incomprehensible love, Thou didst furnish me with the bandage of justification by which I directed to Thee all my thoughts, words, actions, and so attached myself indissolubly to Thee."

It was indeed a sketch of devotion to the Sacred Heart which St. Gertrude had traced out for herself. Reparation was already included. The following act was made by her to God the Father, to repair her own abuse of divine grace: "Thou hast, O Lord, overwhelmed me with graces, but too often I have spoilt all by my malice and wickedness. I beg of Thee to supply for this by that powerful love, the plenitude of which is possessed by Him who sits at Thy right hand, and who has made Himself bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. It is by Him, through the Holy Spirit, that Thou hast enabled us

to act with these exalted virtues of compassion, humility, and reverence. Through Him also I offer my sorrow for my innumerable infidelities towards Thy goodness; notwithstanding its greatness, I have resisted it again and again by thought, words, and actions, but especially in using the present favours with so little fidelity, care, and reverence. If Thou hadst given to me, so unworthy, a thread of tow in remembrance, I should have paid it more respect.

"O my God, I cannot believe that these graces, by which I have profited so little, were given to me for myself alone, as Thy Eternal wisdom knows everyone. Therefore, O Giver of all gifts, who hast given me so many gratuitous and undeserved favours, grant that on reading this some loving heart may compassionate Thy sufferings, that it may praise and adore Thee, because only zeal for souls could cause Thee to preserve so long in the mire of my heart so precious a gem that it may extol Thy mercy, saying with mouth and heart: 'To Thee, O God the Father, from whom all things proceed, may all creatures give praise, as in justice bound. To Thee be honour and power, blessing and glory!'"

CHAPTER XI

THE ADVENT OF THE INFANT JESUS INTO THE HEART OF ST. GERTRUDE

"IT happened on the holy night when the sweet dew of Thy divinity fell and heaven showered blessings on the whole world. My soul, as a fleece exposed in mystic meditation, was saturated with this dew.

"I wished to meditate and excite my devotion on this divine birth, when the Virgin brought forth, as a star sends forth a ray of light, her Son, true God and true Man. It seemed to me that He was presented to me, and that I received into my heart a tender child just born, though He bore within Himself the highest perfection, the highest of all gifts! While my soul possessed Him it seemed to me that it was transformed entirely into Him, even to His hue, if we may call hue what can be compared to no earthly thing.

"My soul also understood in a more perfect manner those marvellous words, 'God shall be all in all' (1 Cor. xv. 28), once she possessed her Well-Beloved in her midst. She also drank in with an insatiable avidity the following words, which were presented to her as a heavenly drink: 'As I am the figure and substance of God the Father in His Divinity, so shalt thou be the figure of My substance in the name of My humanity; and as the sun's rays infuse the air, so shall thy deified soul be infused; and thus penetrated, thou shalt be prepared for a more familiar union with Me.'

"O delicious balm of the divinity, flowing everywhere in streams of charity, putting forth buds and flowers unto eternity, and at the end filling all space! O strength truly irresistible, of God's right hand! A vessel as

frail as my soul is only fit by its wickedness to be contemned, and yet it was used to receive so precious a flow. Here is an indisputable testimony to the excess of God's tenderness, that He did not deprive me of it when I strayed so far from Him in the paths of sin. Instead of which, the sweetness of this heavenly union is given to me in as great a degree as I am capable of."

CHAPTER XII

THE SOUL OF ST. GERTRUDE IS SEALED WITH THE SEAL OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

IN the same year, on the Feast of the Purification, Gertrude was confined to her bed by a painful illness, and she was complaining in her own heart that it would deprive her of the divine visit with which she was ordinarily favoured on that day, when suddenly Mary, the sweet Mother of Jesus, appeared to her, and to console her said: "Thou hast never felt any sharper pains in thy body; but these are to prepare thee to receive the richest present that My Son has ever given thee. For this reason thy spirit has been strengthened by bodily pain."

"Consoled by these words I received the Bread of Life just before the procession, and I began to meditate on God and on myself. I saw that my soul, like wax that is placed carefully before the fire to melt, was impressed as a seal upon the bosom of our Lord. Suddenly, I saw it surround and partly enter into this sacred Treasure-house, and at once it was marked with the seal of the glorious and immutable Trinity."

It was therefore on the Breast of Jesus and under the pressure of the Sacred Heart that St. Gertrude's soul was marked with the seal of the most Holy Trinity. Transformed, she cried out in her gratitude: "O devouring fire! Thou, O God, hast possessed and detached me, and now Thou dost communicate to me Thy ardent fire. It is so strong that, instead of being extinguished in the damp earth of my heart, it has dried up in me the waters of worldly joys, then pulverized the strong affection I had for my own will, which time has so much hardened.

O fire truly consuming, whose activity is exercised on our vices while Thou dost become, for the soul, an unction sweet and refreshing! It is in Thee, and in Thee alone, that we receive the power to change ourselves into the image and likeness of Him who created us. O burning furnace! The soul sees in Thee a vision of true peace; Thy work changes the dross into gold pure and tested, when the soul, tired of illusions, at last desires with all the strength of her spirit, and finds in Thee all truth."

CHAPTER XIII

OUR LORD GIVES THE SAINT A MISSION CONNECTED WITH HIS SACRED HEART

WHEN we compare the life of St. Gertrude and that of St. Margaret Mary we are astonished at seeing the same favours granted to these two lovers of the Sacred Heart. Permanent dwelling in their souls, wound on the heart, impression of the seal of the most Holy Trinity, exchange of hearts between Jesus and the soul: one might think the two lives almost identical, except that St. Gertrude dwelt more often on Thabor than did St. Margaret Mary. The latter knew very little else than the blood-stained rocks of Calvary.

And why did our Lord thus manifest His hidden graces to all? Because He gave to these two souls a special mission and sent both to the faithful. Presented with so many graces from our Lord, they are worthy of all respect and confidence, and in consequence, we are better disposed to receive the graces they bring us from the very Heart of our Lord. Not that we may presume to desire the extraordinary privileges of these holy souls. "It is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to dogs, but the whelps may yet eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." We ordinary Christians, like the Canaan woman, ask no more, but nevertheless we earnestly beg these crumbs from the delicious banquet of these spouses of the Sacred Heart. May the Sacred Heart answer us: "Thy faith is great, thou art saved, and thou also shalt receive gifts from My Heart!"

Let us now examine St. Gertrude's mission, and afterwards we shall see its nature and characteristics.

On Quinquagesima Sunday, which followed the Purification, our Lord promised to give her His Sacred Heart. She felt during Mass that God urged her to desire still greater graces. "Above all, I felt it particularly," she tells us, "while they were singing the response composed of the words which were addressed to Abraham, *Benedicens benedicam tibi*" (with blessings I will bless thee). "'To Thee, and to thy race will I give the land.' Thy hand, O Jesus, touched Thy Sacred Heart, and made me understand the land which such boundless liberality promised me. O blessed land, which makes thy inhabitants happy in overwhelming them with bliss! Delightful field, where the least grain suffices to satiate the hunger of all the elect with whatever is desirable to the human heart!

"But, O my God, by what merit on my part, or by what judgment on Thine, hast Thou been able to realize in me this inestimable gift?

"Certainly love stands not on dignity, but is full of condescension; love carries all before it, and does not wait for reasons; the mind cannot understand such conduct, but it has inebriated Thee, O my loving God, so far as to lose Thyself, if I dare so to speak, in uniting with a creature so little resembling Thee."

And so our Lord promised to give His Heart to her and to her race. He looked upon her as formerly Jehovah regarded Abraham, and as Assuerus regarded Esther.

On the eve of the Feast of the Dedication, St. Gertrude stood before our Lord, the King of kings, so that she might speak for her people—viz., the Church—as formerly Esther stood before Assuerus. Jesus received her tenderly, and she saw herself admitted into the sanctuary of His loving Heart. She then heard our Lord say to her with great kindness: "Behold I place at thy disposal

the treasures of sweetness of My divine Heart. Thou canst distribute them as thou wilt."

Without any delay St. Gertrude began her mission. Plunging her hand into the Sacred Heart, she drew forth the remedy, sprinkling the numerous enemies who at that time were threatening a country house belonging to the monastery. Afterwards she saw that all those who had been touched by only a single drop of the remedy drawn from the Sacred Heart were really repentant and ready to do penance.

On another occasion our Lord gave to His beloved spouse all the treasures of His Heart to distribute to the whole world. She had first offered her heart to our Lord saying: " Behold, O Lord, my heart, detached from every creature; I offer it to Thee freely. I beg of Thee to wash it in the cleansing water that flowed from Thy sacred side, to beautify it by plunging it into the Precious Blood of Thy sweet Heart, and to embalm it for Thyself alone in the odorous perfume of Thy divine love." She then saw the Son of God offering to God the Father her heart united to His divine Heart.

This was represented under the form of a chalice composed of two parts joined together by wax. At this sight she, full of humility and devotion, said to our Lord: " Grant, O loving God, that my heart may follow Thee as refreshment is carried about by servants for their masters. Keep it always near to Thee to draw from, or to pour therein, at whatever time or for whatever person it shall please Thee." The Son of God received this offering very lovingly, and said to His Father: " To Thy eternal praise, O Holy Father, I consecrate this heart; it will spread abroad the treasure enclosed by My divine Heart in My humanity, to be distributed to the whole world."

And after this day, when, as frequently happened, Gertrude offered her heart to God in saying the above words, it seemed to her to be full to overflowing. It

abounded in praise and thanksgiving; sometimes the heavenly inhabitants received an increase of joy, sometimes those on earth profited for their advancement in holiness. This will be seen in what follows. She also understood it was our Lord's will that she should write this for the good of many souls.

This mission of St. Gertrude's was not to terminate with her life. She remained in possession of the treasures of the divine Heart to distribute them to all souls. Our Lord appeared to her once and asked her for her heart, saying: "Give Me thy heart, My well-beloved." When she had complied joyfully with His request, it seemed to her that our Lord placed her heart in His divine Heart and made it go down a long channel to the earth. He showered abundantly, through this channel, the gifts of His goodness and the treasures of His tenderness. Then He said: "I will in future take pleasure in using your heart as a channel: through it I will pour from the flowing fountain of My divine Heart torrents of divine consolation on all those who prepare themselves to receive what thou dost desire to give them—that is to say, who have recourse to thee in humility and confidence."

Yet, however efficacious were St. Gertrude's words, she was not to be the apostle of the Sacred Heart. This honour was reserved for St. Margaret Mary. St. Gertrude's glory is to have been chosen to be the prophetess and theologian of the Sacred Heart. We must now study this double character in the mission entrusted to St. Benedict's daughter.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW ST. GERTRUDE WAS THE PROPHETESS OF THE SACRED HEART

ONE day during Advent, while she was making her meditation, the Apostle St. John appeared to her. His garment was of golden tissue ornamented with eagles, also of gold. On his right shoulder he bore a lily and these words: "The disciple whom Jesus loved." On his left shoulder another lily and the words: "Guardian of the Holy Virgin." This recalled the double privilege he had of being in name and reality, before all the other Apostles, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and then to have had entrusted to him by our Lord Himself, just before His death on the cross, the guardianship of His Lily, His Virgin Mother. He also bore on his breast a marvellous *rational*,* because of the favour he had received at the Last Supper of being allowed to rest his head on the breast of Jesus. There was engraved on it the words: "In the beginning was the Word."

Then Gertrude said to our Lord: "Why, O Lord, hast Thou presented to me, so unworthy, this friend who is so dear to Thee?" Our Lord replied: "That I may inspire him with a special friendship for thee, as thou hast no Apostle for thyself, I choose him to be before Me thy special patron in heaven."

And for what reason was such a favour granted to St. Gertrude? She tells us herself. On the feast of this Apostle, as she was giving full scope to her fervour, the disciple whom Jesus loved appeared to her and loaded her with many tokens of his love. She then recommended to him many Sisters who had great confidence in her.

* The *rational* was the high-priest's breastplate (Exod. xxv. 7).

St. John received kindly all these requests, saying: "In this am I like my Lord, for I love those who love me."

Gertrude said to him: "May not even I receive some grace on your sweet feast?" He replied: "Come with me; thou art the chosen one of my Lord. Let us rest together on the breast of Jesus; there are hidden all the treasures of happiness." And, taking her with him, he conducted her into the presence of our Lord, placing her on His right, while he went round to place himself on His left. They both then rested on the breast of Jesus. St. John, touching with respectful tenderness the breast of our Lord, said: "Behold the Holy of Holies which attracts to Itself all that is good in heaven and on earth."

Then St. Gertrude asked St. John why he had chosen the left side of our Lord and had placed her on the right. He answered: "Because I have carried off many victories; I am become of one mind with God; I may penetrate with an intensity that is not possible to a person still living; I have therefore chosen what is impenetrable, but thou who still livest an earthly life cannot, like me, enter into the closed side to learn, therefore I have placed thee by the wound of the divine Heart. Thou canst more easily draw from It the sweetness and consolation which divine love by Its continual overflow showers abundantly on all those who desire it."

As she felt an immense happiness on hearing the very holy pulsations which caused the divine Heart to beat uninterruptedly, she said to St. John: "Well-beloved of God, didst thou not experience the charm of the divine pulsations, which are for me at this moment the source of such happiness, when resting thy head, at the Last Supper, on this blessed breast?" He replied: "Yes, I have felt it again and again, and its sweetness has penetrated my soul, like the sweetest honey which im-

pregnates with its flavour a small piece of fresh bread. And my soul has been heated as a furnace by a burning fire which causes it to boil."

She then said: "Why, then, hast thou kept so great a silence, that thou hast never written anything, were it ever so little, that might cause us to know it and profit by the knowledge?" He answered: "That was not my mission. To the Church still young I had to transmit one only word about the uncreated Word of God the Father: it will suffice till the end of the world to satisfy the intellect of the whole human race, and no one will ever perfectly understand it. As to explaining these pulsations, that is kept for later times. The world grown old, hearing of this mystery, will recover some warmth of divine love."

This, then, is the magnificent prophecy of St. John concerning the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart of which we ourselves are witnesses. And why was St. John chosen to announce to the world devotion to the Sacred Heart? Because his apostolate did not end with his life; he continues it in heaven. The Sacred Heart had been given to him; it is he who must always reveal it in the world.

St. John had finished speaking, and St. Gertrude wondered to behold him lying on our Saviour's breast. The Apostle answered her thought: "Up to this moment I have always appeared to thee as I was on earth, and as I rested on the Lord's breast who is my Friend and only Beloved; but if thou wilt, I will obtain that thou mayest see me as I am, now that I taste the joy of the Lord in heaven."

Gertrude at once desired this ardently. Then she saw in the breast of Jesus the divinity represented under the form of a vast ocean, and in this ocean, under the form of a small bee, St. John swam about like a little fish, with ineffable delight and liberty. She also under-

stood that he kept himself there, where the current of the divinity acted more powerfully on mankind. And the heart of St. John, filled and inebriated with the delights of heaven, spread like a fine net all over the world the drops of divine sweetness. It was the glorious doctrine of the salvation of men that he had announced, and in particular those words of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word."

This is indeed the disciple who had drunk the waves of his Gospel from the Sacred Heart; it was fitting that he should complete what was omitted in revealing the new source which was to flow during these later times. Bossuet expresses admirably this conclusion: "It was not sufficient for our Lord to shower gifts on St. John; He gave him also the source of them. All gifts come from love, and He also gave him His love. Love springs from the heart; He therefore gave Him the Heart, and therefore the source from whence he had already received such great gifts." Our Lord said: "Come, my dear disciple, I have chosen thee to be the teacher of charity; come, drink at its source; come and learn the words full of unction by which thou wilt draw my faithful ones. Draw near this Heart, which only breathes love for men; and in order to speak better of my love, come nearer to feel the better its intensity."

But St. John, if thou art the master, open to us the Heart of Jesus; let us see Its actions which only love can accomplish!

He has done this in all his writings; all that St. John wrote explains the feelings of the Heart of Jesus. In this Heart we find the summary of all Christian mysteries; mysteries of love, whose beginnings are in the Heart—a Heart, if we may say it, entirely consumed with love, its palpitations and pulsations being produced only by love.

Do you wish to see St. John showing you the secrets

of this Heart? He rises to Its beginning: *In principio*, arriving at Its end: *Et habitavit in nobis* (He dwelt amongst us). What made Him dwell with us? *Love.* God so loved the world (*Sic Deus dilexit mundum*). Love made Him come down and clothe Himself with our human nature. What other Heart could He have given His Human Nature, than one consumed with love?

O really glorious disciple, to whom Jesus Christ gave His Heart, on which He ordered thee to repose thy head as a place which thou hadst won, thou art now entirely one with Him.

CHAPTER XV

ST. GERTRUDE IS THE THEOLOGIAN OF THE SACRED HEART

IN saying that St. Gertrude is the theologian of the Sacred Heart, do we only mean that she explained its object, character, and practices?

No; her teaching embraces a much wider horizon. She reveals to us the Sacred Heart such as Bossuet understood It, as the centre and summary of all mysteries. "In the Heart is the summary of all Christian mysteries." For this daughter of the cloister, in the thirteenth century, devotion to the Sacred Heart was what Cardinal Pie found it—"the quintessence of Christianity." For her, as for the great Cardinal, Christianity identified itself with devotion to the Sacred Heart. How comes it that certain writers have not been able to bring out the original character of her revelations? And instead of rectifying this omission, modern writers have only copied some passages from the *Herald of Divine Love*. Doubtless the learned translator of her works had properly appreciated the hidden treasure; but why, then, does he only indicate the road to be followed instead of himself undertaking a work for which he was so well prepared? We give the manner in which he resumes and characterizes St. Gertrude's teaching on the Sacred Heart:

"It was St. Gertrude's mission to reveal the manner and action of the divine Heart in the economy of divine glory and the sanctification of souls, and in this important point we do not wish to separate her from St. Mechtilde. In the question of the Heart of God made man, both the one and the other are distinguished among the doctors and mystics of the various ages of the Church. We do not even except the Saints of these later times, by whom

our Lord has made known that He wished for a public and official worship to be offered to His Sacred Heart. These propagated devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout the Church, and thus have worked successfully in bringing nearer together the unknown Creator and His ungrateful creature; but they did not teach the manifold, necessary, and universal mysteries with the insistence, persuasion, and perfection found in the revelations of these two Saints who lived three centuries before the devotion to the Sacred Heart was publicly taught. Until then the mystery had been concealed among divine secrets, and scarcely mentioned by the different doctors who had exalted the love of God for man.

"The profound understanding that St. Gertrude had of the mystery of the love of the Heart of the Man-God was really marvellous; we might even consider it to be, in itself, the most convincing proof of the truth of her revelations. What she has said surpasses all that man's imagination could conceive. The Sacred Heart shows Itself to her, now as the treasure-house in which are to be found all riches, then as a harp touched by the Holy Spirit, giving joy to the most Blessed Trinity and the heavenly court. It is then represented to us as an overflowing fount of water which will carry refreshment to the souls in Purgatory, graces to souls fighting on earth, and torrents of delight which will inebriate the elect in the celestial Jerusalem. It is shown to us as a golden thurible from which arise perfumes of incense each as different as the races of men for whom our Saviour died on the Cross. Again we see It as an altar, on which the faithful place their offerings, the elect their adoration, the Angels their worship, and on which the High-Priest immolates Himself. We see It as a lamp suspended between heaven and earth; as a cup from which men drink, but not the Angels, though they receive great joy from It. In It the prayer *Pater Noster* was conceived, brought

forth, and is Its sweet fruit. By It are all our negligences towards God, our Lady, and the Saints supplied. To enable us to fulfil our obligations the divine Heart becomes our servant and our pledge; only in It are our works covered with that perfection and nobility which make them pleasing in God's eyes; through It alone flow the graces which come down on the earth. Finally, It is the holy dwelling, the sacred sanctuary of souls, as they leave this world, to keep them in perfect happiness for all eternity " (Preface, xviii).

CHAPTER XVI

PROOFS OF ST. GERTRUDE'S MISSION: THE GIFTS OF PROPHECY AND MIRACLES

THE religious of the monastery of Helfta understood how great was St. Gertrude's mission, and they guarded carefully all the testimony capable of inspiring us with confidence in the great friend of the Sacred Heart.

"Thanks be rendered to the Lord God, Giver of all good, by all that heaven possesses in its immensity, the earth in its fulness, and the abyss in its depths. May all bring to Him the eternal, immense and immutable praise which proceeds from uncreated love and obtains in Him its full and entire end. It is due to Him for the unceasing goodness which has caused Him to look on a soul which drew Him by the gifts obtained from His bounty."

The Holy Scriptures say that the word of two witnesses is sufficient to prove an assertion, but here we have several witnesses to prove that Gertrude was chosen by our Lord, that, through her, He might make known the secrets of His love.

The Gift of Prophecy.

The first and principal witness shall be God Himself, for He has many times verified the truth of what she had predicted, confirmed exteriorly what she had only known secretly, made her prayers efficacious, and by her merits delivered from temptation those who had prayed to her with a humble and contrite heart.

God gave to His spouse the gift of prophecy. Rodolphe, King of the Romans, was dead and Gertrude prayed with the others for the election of his successor. On the same

day, at the time when the election was being made in another country, she told the Mother Superior that it was over. She added that the newly elected King would perish the same day by the hand of his successor, which prediction was verified.

At the same time our monastery was threatened by a wicked man; the peril was great and seemed inevitable. Having finished her prayers, she announced to the Mother Abbess that, thanks to God, the danger was over, and at the same time our procurator arrived and said that the criminal had been condemned by the judge, which St. Gertrude had known secretly by revelation. Therefore the Abbess, and all those who heard this good news, gave thanks to God with great joy.

Extraordinary Graces.

A person long tormented with temptations was told in a dream to recommend herself to St. Gertrude's prayers. She did so with great confidence, and had the happiness of feeling herself delivered by her prayers and merits.

I think this deserves to be recorded. A person who was intending to communicate had, in consequence of an obsession, been troubled by many sinful thoughts during Mass. She had been on the point of consenting and taking pleasure in them, which made her very unhappy, for her mind being in this state, she dared not receive Holy Communion. At last by an inspiration, that we may believe came from God, she lifted up a piece of cloth which the servant of God had torn off her shoe and thrown to one side, and placed it with confidence on her heart, praying to our Lord; she reminded Him of the love which had caused Him to detach her from all human affection and choose for His only home the heart of His well-beloved, filling her with spiritual gifts. She therefore begged Him by St. Gertrude's merits mercifully to deliver her from her temptation. Oh, happy effect of prayer

worthy of all our respect! She had no sooner laid the piece of cloth on her heart with confidence than all carnal temptation was taken away from her for ever!

We need not think it requires a great effort to believe, for does not our Lord say: "He who believes in Me shall do the works that I do, and even greater shall he do"? (John xix. 12). So our divine Lord, who deigned during His life to cure the woman who only touched the hem of His garment, could as easily, when in His goodness He wished it, deliver by the merits of His servant a soul for whom He had died.

Gift of Miracles.

Gertrude had also the gift of miracles. In March the cold was so very severe it might have been the cause of death to men and beasts. St. Gertrude heard that it was feared there would be no crops that year, because from the time of the moon the cold would continue some time longer. One day, therefore, she prayed devoutly to our Lord for this intention and for others. When her prayer was finished she received this answer from our Lord: "Do not for a moment doubt that all thy prayers are answered." She replied: "Lord, if I may not doubt, it is right that I should give thanks; give me a sign, making this cold to cease." After having said this, she thought no more about it, but after Mass she left the church, and on returning saw the path covered with water, the snow and ice having melted everywhere. All who saw how great a change had come about, contrary to the natural order of things, were astonished, and asked what had caused it. But as they did not know that the servant of God had obtained it by her prayers, they said the thaw was only temporary and would not last. However, very soon they saw spring showing signs of beginning, and it continued uninterruptedly.

At another time, during the harvest, the rain came down

unceasingly, and fearing that the wheat and other fruits of the earth would be ruined, they redoubled their prayers. Gertrude, praying one day with the others, insisted with our Lord that He should be appeased; her prayer was so efficacious that she obtained from God the formal assurance that through her intercession He would grant more favourable weather. He kept His promise. On the same day, in spite of heavy clouds which covered the sky, the sun shone out and spread all around the brightness of his warmth. At night, after supper, the community went into the courtyard to work. The sun was still shining, but the clouds, heavy with rain, hung in the air. Then I myself (one of the religious of Helfta) heard Gertrude, sighing deeply, say: "O Lord of the world, I do not wish Thee, as though Thou wert obliged, to obey my unworthy will, but if, only on my account and contrary to the decrees of Thy justice, Thou hast hindered the rain from falling, I pray Thee give free play to Thy justice and may Thy will be accomplished entirely." She had barely finished when the lightning flashed, followed by a peal of thunder, and great drops of rain began to fall. Then, wholly astonished, she said: "May Thy goodness, most clement Lord, keep back this storm until the community shall have finished the work begun." And as soon as it was done, while the Sisters were on the threshold of the door a pouring rain came down, accompanied with thunder and lightning, and fell with such force that some Sisters who had lingered in the courtyard were drenched.

At other times she obtained miraculous assistance without prayer, and as it seemed by joke. If, for instance, she was working, sitting on a heap of straw, and her bodkin, needle, or other small object was lost in the straw, she said, so as to be heard by all: "Lord, no matter what trouble I should take to find this thing, it would be fruitless; make me, therefore, find it Thyself." Then,

scarcely looking for it, she stretched forth her hand and took from the straw what she had lost, as if it had been lying on a smooth pavement. Such was her way of acting, in great as in little things, always calling to her aid her Well-Beloved who dwelt in her, and always finding in Him a helper most faithful and kind.

CHAPTER XVII

SECOND PROOF OF ST. GERTRUDE'S MISSION: THE TESTIMONY OF HER CONTEMPORARIES

ANOTHER witness calculated to establish the truth is the number of separate and similar depositions made by different people, with one voice attesting that in all that they learned by divine revelation through St. Gertrude, whether it concerned the correction of their faults or their spiritual advancement, they were led to think that she was favoured in a special manner by extraordinary graces.

In her humility, Gertrude believed herself quite unworthy of God's gifts. To prevent illusions she loved to consult holy souls who were favoured with communications from our Lord. These persons, inspired by God, said she was favoured by God, not only in the graces about which she consulted them, but in others much more sublime.

A person who had great confidence in her divine revelations, drawn by her renown, came to the monastery. Our Lord said to her of St. Gertrude: "She is the most faithful of all, one of the elect. I have worked great things in her companion Mechtilde, but I work greater, and will work still greater, in Gertrude."

Another person prayed for Gertrude, and, thinking of the proofs of tender affection that our Lord had shown her, she said in wonder to our Lord: "O God of love, what dost Thou see in her to have communications which honour her so much, resting Thy Heart on her with so much sweetness?" Our Lord replied: "My gratuitous goodness alone urges Me. By my special grace Gertrude cultivates in herself five virtues in which I find my greatest delight: first great purity, born from

an outpouring of My grace; then a true humility, which she draws from the number and greatness of My gifts. The more I work great things in her, the more does she, by the knowledge of her own great weakness, lower herself in the lowest depths of humility. In the third place, a real goodness which causes her to desire ardently the salvation of all men for My glory. Then an unshaken fidelity, consecrating to My glory all she has received without any reserve, for the salvation of the whole human race; and, lastly, true love. She loves Me with all the strength of her heart, with all her soul, and with all her powers, and her neighbour as herself for My sake."

Our Lord then let the person see on His breast a splendid jewel wonderfully chased in the form of a trefoil, and said to her: "I shall always wear this in honour of my spouse, and the three parts of the jewel will show clearly three things to the heavenly court. The first will show how intimate Gertrude is with Me. There is, in reality, no one on the face of the earth who is more united to me than she is by her purity of intention and goodwill. The splendour of the second shows that on the earth there is no one to whom I am so sweetly drawn as towards her. By the brilliancy of the third is seen that there is no one on earth so faithful to Me, for she refers all the gifts bestowed on her to My praise and glory." And our Lord added: "Thou wilt never find Me taking more pleasure on earth than in the Sacrament of the Altar, and after that in the heart and soul of this My well-beloved, for in her have I placed all the joy of My Heart."

Another person to whose prayers Gertrude had devoutly recommended herself received in prayer this reply: "I am all hers, it is with great delight I throw myself into her arms. Divine love has united me to her inseparably, as the fire unites gold and silver, making one precious substance." This person asked: "Most loving

God, what dost Thou do in her?" He replied: "The beatings of her heart are joined unceasingly to the beatings of My love, and I find therein supreme happiness; at the same time I restrain in Myself the strength of My love's beatings, until the hour of her death; then she will find three powerful results: the first will be the glory to which God the Father calls her, the second the joy with which I shall receive her, and the third the love with which the Holy Ghost will unite her with Himself."

As this person prayed another day she received this answer: "She is My dove without gall, for she detests sin like gall from the bottom of her heart. She is the lily I delight in holding in My hand, for My greatest happiness is to take delight in her chaste and pure soul. She is My sweet-smelling rose, for she is patient and grateful in adversity. She is the opening flower on which I rest my eyes, for her soul is full of fire and zeal for virtue and the highest perfection. She is a melodious sound in My crown, where are hung all the pains she has endured as golden bells which rejoice the heavenly court."

Another day at the beginning of Lent St. Gertrude was reading to the community the book generally used at that time, and among other things she stayed with insistence on the words: "That we should love the Lord our God, with our whole heart, our whole soul, and with all our strength." One present, at these words, full of compunction, said to our Lord: "Ah, Lord! how much art Thou loved by this Sister, who by this impressive reading teaches us how we should love Thee." And our Lord replied: "From her infancy I have carried her in My arms; I kept her pure until the day when she united herself to Me of her own free will. Then I gave myself entirely to her with all My divine virtues, and in return placed Myself in her arms. The ardent love she bears Me moves Me to a great tenderness for her, and as wax melts before the fire, so the sweetness of My divine Heart

melts in the fire of her heart and falls drop by drop continually into her soul."

Our Lord added: "My soul takes so much pleasure in her that very often when others offend Me I rest sweetly in her, afflicting her with some pain of body or mind. She accepts them in union with those I bore in My Passion with so much gratitude, and bears them so patiently and humbly, that, appeased by her love, I forgive many sinners."

A person who, at Gertrude's request, had prayed that the Saint might correct her defects, received this reply: "What my elect looks on as defects are really signs of the great progress of her soul in virtue, for it would be difficult for her to receive the great graces I shower down on her without vainglory if they were not hidden under the appearance of defects. When a field is covered with manure it becomes more fertile; so the knowledge she has of her defects causes her to bear sweeter fruits of grace." And our Lord added: "For each defect I have given her a particular grace which causes them entirely to disappear from before My eyes; but when in time I shall have completely transformed them into virtues, then her soul will shine with great splendour."

To all these we may add St. Mechtilde's testimony. Gertrude had gone to ask advice from her holy friend, who was so venerated and reverenced on account of her revelations. She humbly begged St. Mechtilde to ask our Lord about the gifts we have recounted. It was not that she desired to have certitude on a doubtful subject, but she wished to find motives for greater gratitude for so many gratuitous favours. She wished also to receive for the future an assured certainty, in case her unworthiness caused her later on to entertain any doubt. St. Mechtilde, therefore, assiduously consulted our Lord in prayer on the subject; she then saw our Lord under the appearance of a fiancé full of grace and youth, and

more beautiful than any of the numerous Angels who surrounded Him. He wore a green garment which inside shone like gold; His right arm held, drawn close to Him, the person for whom she prayed in such a way that her left side, where was her heart, seemed attached to the wound which love made in His Sacred Heart. Gertrude seemed to have passed her left arm round her Well-Beloved.

St. Mechtilde, full of admiration at what she saw, wished to know the meaning of the vision. Our Lord said to her: "The colour of My garments, green on the outside and shining like gold inside, teaches thee that it is through My power that this loving soul receives her leaves and flowers. Thou seest her heart closely pressed against the wound in My side; understand from that I have so entirely drawn this soul to Myself that always she receives, without any hindrance on her part, all My divine graces."

Gertrude had received from God the gift of counsel. Mechtilde asked our Lord if her advice might be relied on, and if she should continue to speak with certainty? Our Lord replied: "Every time she is preparing to speak, let her by a profound sigh draw to herself the breath of My divine Heart, then all that she says must be looked on as certain, for neither she nor those around her run any risk of error; even more, they will recognize by her words the secrets of My divine Heart." And our Lord said further: "Let her remember the faithful testimony thou wilt give her. And if in the future she feels, in even a small degree, My grace to be less fervent in her through her many occupations, as sometimes happens, tell her not to lose confidence, for I will certainly confirm all her privileges until the end of her life."

Mechtilde questioned our Lord not only on the privilege He had granted His servant, but she asked if she had not committed some fault, and why she was in such haste

to accomplish at once all that she meant to do, making no distinction between prayer, writing, reading, instruction, or the correction and consolation of others.

Our Lord replied: "I have united My Heart to her soul with a union so sure and close that she is entirely one with Me; she submits her will to Mine in everything as harmoniously as members of one body. It is as if someone said: 'Do this,' and at once the hand moves to accomplish the command; he then says 'Look there,' and at once the eyes turn in the direction indicated. In the same way she is intimately united to Me; I work in her soul, and she constantly accomplishes, at once, what I desire. I have chosen her for My dwelling, in such a way that her will, and consequently the works of her good-will, are united to My Heart. She is the hand I make use of. Her mind is so united to Mine that she knows at once what will please Me; the impulse of her soul is like My tongue, and under the influence of My Spirit she says what I wish. Her discretion serves Me as a scourge, and My mercy is extended as soon as she is moved with compassion. Her intentions are as My feet, for she never proposes anything I cannot sanction. She must, therefore, always hasten to follow the impulses of her heart. She will no sooner have finished one piece of business than it will be necessary to prepare to follow My next inspiration. If she should neglect some of the usual practices it need not weigh on her conscience, provided My will is done on some other point."

When Gertrude understood what our Lord in His mercy had answered, she tells us she felt moved to an immense gratitude, and gave great thanks to God for His infinite goodness. Among other things she says: "How is it possible, my Well-Beloved, that Thy goodness should close Thy eyes on so much evil that there is in me? It is not through virtue that I approve always all Thou dost, but by Thy grace alone."

Our Lord then taught her by a comparison: "When a book is printed in too small type to be easily read, a magnifying-glass is used; nothing is altered in the book, all the change proceeds from the instrument used; so if some defect is to be found in thee, My tenderness corrects it and My abundance supplies for it."

CHAPTER XVIII

THIRD TESTIMONY TO ST. GERTRUDE'S MISSION: HER HOLY LIFE

THE third witness to the truth of St. Gertrude's mission is her holy life and conversation. By her actions and her words she plainly showed that she did not seek her own glory, but that of God; and she not only sought it, but ardently laboured for it, sacrificing for it her reputation, her life, and in some way even her soul. It is right that we should bear witness to this, for our Lord says in St. John's Gospel: "He who seeks glory of Him who sent him, is in the truth, and injustice is not in him" (John vii. 18).

Most happy must be a soul the sincerity of whose life is thus vouched for. God's glory, sought unceasingly by her words, actions, extraordinary gifts, fatigue and self-sacrifice never avoided, together with all the virtues, such is the testimony borne by the religious of Helfta in favour of Gertrude's special mission. Her zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was indefatigable. The words from the Book of Proverbs, "The just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread" (Prov. xxviii.), might be used of her. Love for God's glory made her sustain the rights of justice and truth with so much courage that she despised the troubles and contradictions that were her portion in consequence, provided she laboured for the glory of her Lord.

Gertrude's zeal caused her to gather together and write whatever she thought might be useful to others. She did this purely for God's glory, expecting no thanks, but only desiring the salvation of souls. She also willingly lent her writings to anyone who seemed likely to benefit by them, and when she knew that in some places there were

no copies of the Holy Scriptures, she obtained the most useful books, and as great a number as possible, so as to gain all to Jesus Christ.

To lose her sleep, to disturb her rest, to retard her meals, to neglect everything pertaining to her personal convenience, all this was to her a joy rather than a trouble. And that was not yet enough. She often withdrew from the sweetness of contemplation if she were needed by some poor tempted soul, by one in sorrow, or by one needing her charitable help. For as iron put into the fire becomes itself fire, so Gertrude, full of the fire of divine love, became love, and only desired the salvation of others.

In distributing books, Gertrude added her own sweet, persuasive words. Whenever an opportunity occurred of exhorting anyone, she did not allow her modesty, which otherwise shone so conspicuously among her virtues, to prevent her speaking; she despised all human respect, and, full of confidence, armed herself with faith in Him for whom she would have wished to conquer the whole world. Therefore, steeping her pen in the blood of her heart as ink, she wrote words inspired by her affectionate devotedness, her love and her wisdom. And no one, however hard or perverted, even if possessed of but little piety, could listen unmoved to her words, but would at least have the will and desire to amend. As soon as she perceived that the person she was speaking to was touched and repentant, she became full of compassion and treated him with her usual sweet charity. It seemed as if her heart yearned to give consolation, but she sought to give it less by her words than by her prayers and sighs to God for the person who needed them. In her conversations she took great care never to draw to herself the heart of anyone, nor so to engage the affections of anyone as to withdraw them from God.

Gertrude's zeal led her gently to warn others of their faults. When she had noticed a fault in any person and

desired to see it corrected, if she saw that her desire was not realized, she felt so great a pain that she was inconsolable, until either her prayers to God or her exhortations and those of others had effected some improvement. But if, according to the way of the world, to console her, they bade her not disturb herself about those who would not be corrected, considering that they only would be punished, her heart was pierced with great sorrow; she said she would rather die than be consoled for a fault of which they would only know the magnitude after death, when in eternal torments.

Our Lord wished to reward her for her zeal for the glory of God and the perfection of His spouses. He appeared to her, standing and seeming to bear on His slender shoulders a great house which leaned over Him and about to fall. He said to her: "See with what care and pain I bear My beloved house, holy religion, which is threatened all over the world with ruin. There are indeed very few who sincerely strive to defend or extend it, or for that end incur any trouble. So, My well-beloved, consider and compassionate My fatigue." Our Lord added: "All those who by word or act promote the spread of religion are like pillars, which, according to their strength, support the burden that overpowers Me."

Touched to the depths of her soul and ardently desiring to show her sorrow to the Lord God, her Well-Beloved, she used, from that time, every effort to cause the spread of religion, and observed, even beyond her strength, all the most severe rules of the Order, so that she might give a good example.

Our Lord also wished to add encouragement to what He had already said to His beloved spouse. A very pious person, after receiving a divine revelation, sent Gertrude the following letter:

"Enter, O devoted spouse of Christ, into the joy of thy Lord. The divine Heart loves thee with great sweet-

ness because of thy entire fidelity to the defence of truth. Considering His good pleasure, or rather thine, He desires thee to rest in the sweet shade of His consolations. A tree well rooted and planted by the side of running water produces abundant fruit, so, by the grace of God, bear for thy Beloved in each of thy thoughts, words, and actions the sweetest fruits. The fire of persecution will never cause thee to wither, for thou art constantly watered with abundant streams of the grace of God. As in all thy works thou seekest only God's glory and not thine own, thou givest thy Beloved a hundredfold the result of what thou thyself doest or causest to be done by others, as much as lies in thy power. Our Lord also supplies God His father with the homage thou regrettest not to render thyself or through others, and He intends to reward thee as though thou hadst fully succeeded in offering it to Him. The whole of the heavenly court rejoices, taking part in thy joy, thanking and praising the Lord."

To these witnesses we will add that given by the learned and pious Lanspergius the Carthusian, a great admirer of St. Gertrude:

"She was always full of a great zeal to defend and extend the glory of God and the fulfilment of His divine will, as well as for the holiness and strict observance of religious practices. Although our Lord visited her with frequent illnesses, she was always a tender mother to those around her, and a consoler ready by her charity to do kindness to all who were laden with care or sadness or were in desolation or temptation. For this in reality she received a peculiar grace from God; no one ever went humbly to her to ask advice, to recommend themselves to her prayers, to thank her for some kindness or service, without afterwards receiving a special blessing from our Lord" (Letter of Dom John Lanspergius of Cologne).

CHAPTER XIX

ST. GERTRUDE'S CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE is the special virtue of the friends of the Sacred Heart. Blessed Margaret Mary was a perfect model in her day; Gertrude set the example in the thirteenth century.

It would be possible to give wonderful proofs, not only of her virtues in general, but in particular of her extraordinary confidence. She possessed a conscience so at peace that neither troubles, nor losses, nor hindrances, nor even her own defects, could disturb it. She always put her confidence in the infinite mercy of God, and remained in peace even when our Lord withdrew some grace that she ordinarily possessed; she was indifferent as to whether she had it or not. The only difference was that, when tried, hope came to strengthen her; she believed firmly that trials from without, as those from within, could equally turn to her profit.

Then, as when we expect a messenger bringing long-desired good tidings, so she expected with joy abundant consolations, and considered any present trial the best preparation for it. She did not lose courage nor give way to despair at the sight of her failings; seeing herself deprived of the consolation, she only prepared herself more carefully to receive God's gifts. Even when in her own eyes she felt herself in darkness and like a dead fire, by the grace of God she soon regained her usual state, and on re-entering into herself did not fail to find the divine resemblance there.

As a man stumbling along in the dark suddenly finds himself enlightened by the sun, so she found herself suddenly surrounded by the splendour of the divine presence. Her soul was soon beautified and adorned

with new colours with which to appear before the immortal King of ages. She thus was once more worthy of being admitted to His society and intimacy. But she always threw herself at our Lord's feet to be washed from the stains she felt to be inevitable during this life. She only omitted doing this when she felt herself inundated and penetrated through and through with divine grace. Then, conforming herself in all to the will of God, she gave herself up to Him as an instrument destined to show what divine love could do in her and by her. She never, however, tried to treat the Lord of all as her equal.

From this confidence came her readiness to go to Holy Communion. When by her reading or hearing sermons she heard of the danger of communicating unworthily, she always communicated with greater joy and confidence in the goodness of our Lord. No matter how poor, how null to her her preparation seemed to be—even the omission of her usual prayers or practices—nothing could hinder her from receiving our Lord. She looked upon all the efforts we could make, compared with this gratuitous and precious gift, as a drop of water compared with the ocean. But although she looked upon no preparation as sufficient and depended on the goodness of God, she nevertheless put her whole heart into her preparation, so that she might as far as possible receive the Sacrament with a pure heart and a holy love.

Every grace she received she attributed to this holy confidence, considering it so much the more gratuitous as this holy confidence had been given freely to her by Him who alone can bestow it. Her confidence often made her wish to die, but through conformity to the divine will she was equally ready at any time to live or to die. In dying she hoped to attain to happiness, and in living to increase the divine glory.

One day, walking along the road, she accidentally fell down a rocky place. She felt at once most marvellous

joy in her soul, and said to our Lord: "What a blessing it would have been for me, my well-beloved Lord, if this fall had caused me to appear before Thee!" And as we, quite astonished, asked her if she was not afraid of dying without having received the Sacraments, she replied: "I desire with my whole heart to receive the Sacraments, so helpful to the soul, but the will of God's providence seems to me the better and more salutary preparation. And, indeed, in whatever way He wills, either by a sudden death, or by one expected, I will go very willingly to Him. I am certain that by whatever death I die I shall not be deprived of our Lord's mercy. It alone can save me either in a long-looked-for, or in a sudden, death."

Every occurrence found her thus ready to rejoice; her mind was always raised to God and sustained by a wonderful constancy. So one could apply to her those words: "He who trusts in God is brave as a lion."

Our Lord Himself deigned to bear witness to this strong virtue. A person one day questioned our Lord without obtaining from Him any reply. She was quite surprised when our Lord at last said: "I made thee wait for My reply because thou hadst no confidence in what My goodness deigns to operate in thee. Thou art very different in that from My well-beloved, who, strongly rooted in the virtue of confidence, always resorts to My goodness, and I shall never refuse anything she asks of Me."

CHAPTER XX

ST. GERTRUDE'S HUMILITY

IN the galaxy of virtues with which our Lord had embellished St. Gertrude in order that He might dwell in her, humility, that treasure of all graces and guardian of all goodness, shone with the greatest splendour. It made her think herself unworthy of God's gifts, and she never desired to receive any for her sole benefit. She looked upon herself as a channel through which grace flowed to the elect by a secret disposition of God's providence. As for herself, she seemed utterly unworthy; she thought she abused all God's gifts, great and small, and all she did was to distribute them to others by her words or writings.

Such was the fidelity with which she acted towards God, and in what concerned herself her humility often made her say: "If later I should have to bear the torments of hell, as I deserve, I would still rejoice at seeing God's gifts fructify in others." In reality she thought she knew of no one so despicable as herself to whom God's gifts had been so plentifully given. This did not prevent her holding herself ready at any moment to receive any graces God might send her, and to use them for others as though they belonged to her neighbour, and were only sent to them through her. Judging herself according to the light of truth, she looked upon herself as the least of those of whom the Prophet had said: "All nations are before me as though they were not." And in another place: "As a little dust," etc. And as a little dust under a feather or any other object is hidden from the sun's rays in the lightest shade, so did she seek to hide herself from the honour which might come to her through the graces God granted her. She gave all glory to Him

who, by His grace, prevents those whom He calls, and assists those whom He justifies. She only kept for herself the crime, as she calls it, of having received such great and gratuitous gifts with so much unworthiness and ingratitude. But because of the glory due to our Lord she could not hide His goodness to her; she revealed it and made it known to others, urged by a reason which made her say: "It would be most unsuitable that God's gifts to me should not bear more fruit in others than in my miserable self, who am only fit to spoil all."

One day when she was travelling she said to our Lord in deep humility: "The greatest of Thy miracles, Lord, in my eyes, is that the earth should bear a sinner so unworthy as myself." But our Lord, who exalts those who abase themselves, touched by these words, replied with sweetness: "The earth allows itself willingly to be trodden under foot: for heaven, in all its majesty, waits with thrills of joy for the happy time when it shall have the honour of bearing thee." Oh, great and marvellous goodness of God! He honours a soul so much the more when at the sight of its own unworthiness it greatly humbles itself.

Gertrude entirely despised vainglory; if any thought of it came to her mind while she was occupied in prayer or in any good work, she acquiesced very willingly, with this intention: "If anyone seeing thee should seek to imitate what seems to him good, so much the better; that will always be something gained for God." She always looked upon herself in the house of God as a scarecrow in the Father's house, only useful in being put on a tree in the fruit season to frighten the birds or preserve the harvest.

It would now be superfluous to speak in particular of the other virtues which shone so conspicuously in her—viz., her obedience, abstinence, voluntary poverty, prudence, strength, temperance, mercy, cordiality,

constancy, gratitude, her joy in the happiness of others, her scorn of the world, and many other virtues. The virtue of discretion, mother of all virtues, reigned absolute mistress in her soul.

She was also magnificently adorned with that other virtue of which we have already spoken: confidence, which is the foundation of all virtues, to which nothing that we desire can be refused, least of all any of the virtues. Lastly, the noble and diligent keeper of all virtues, humility, as has already been said, had struck deep roots in her soul. But above all charity, queen among the queenly virtues, the love of God and her neighbour, had solidly established its throne in her outward behaviour as well as in her soul.

CHAPTER XXI

DIFFERENT OPINIONS OF THE DOCTRINE AND HOLINESS OF ST. GERTRUDE

IN the spirit of St. Gertrude there is nothing of the Jansenist, which nevertheless taints that of many pious people. But, on the other side, her piety could not be restrained by methods, rules, and practices which too often fetter and paralyze devotion, as Saul's armour embarrassed David. With St. Gertrude there was nothing of the "artfulness, strategy, or clever analysis which one meets with elsewhere, methods which succeed more or less, and which, when recommenced, run the risk of becoming unbearable" (Dom Guéranger). Unenlightened souls might be disconcerted either by her advice or by her example, and think her spirit not in conformity with true devotion. In order to reassure them we will relate here the different opinions formed by illustrious personages, our masters in the spiritual life, on St. Gertrude's teaching, and on the profit that souls may draw from them in our own times.

A provincial of the Carmelite Order, the Rev. F. Denys of the Mother of God, who lived at the beginning of the seventeenth century, has gathered together in the following words the judgments made in his time on St. Gertrude's works:

"In the Carthusian Order the Blessed John Lanspergius and Loher approved and profoundly honoured the spirit and revelations of St. Gertrude. In the Order of St. Dominic and in that of St. Francis many excellent priests have also approved. In St. Benedict's Order that great master of the spiritual life, Louis de Blois, never tires of praising her. I know that the discalced Carmelites have so much veneration for St. Gertrude that they obtained

from the Pope permission to say the office on the day of her feast with the same privileges and advantages as though she had been in their Order. They show in this that they have inherited the spirit of St. Teresa their Mother, who was very devout and united in friendship with this Saint, for which reason they are so often painted together as a proof of the resemblance between them, so much so that if we approve of one, we must approve of the other."

Monsieur Olier, the pious founder of St. Sulpice, so learned in the secrets of the interior life, has written a beautiful page on St. Gertrude: " St. Gertrude, through her simplicity and profound humility, caused our Lord to treat her in a singular manner, by which He greatly sanctified her. Her writings always lead the soul to union with our Lord, very different from some other contemplative books which tend to draw the soul from the knowledge of and union with the holy humanity of Christ. She was not sanctified by our Lord's exterior and visible ways in dealing with her, but by His love. He treated St. Teresa in quite a different way. Revere with much faith the childlike simplicity which guided this great Saint and induced our Lord to treat her with so much familiarity and simplicity. Her soul was as a simple dove " (*Spiritual Letters*).

In his admirable book *All for Jesus*, Father Faber several times mentions St. Gertrude and proposes her as an example. With as much truth as depth, he discovered the real characteristics of her spirit. In the chapter entitled " God is the Centre of Everything," he shows us St. Gertrude as the true model of a soul that offered all things to God by Jesus Christ our Saviour. " Sometimes," he says, " she offered her actions in union with the mutual love of the three divine Persons of the Adorable Trinity; sometimes she offered the pains and tears of Jesus for the negligences of her actions;

sometimes she made her oblation in union with the prayer of Jesus, and in the virtue of the Holy Ghost, for the emendation of her sins and the supply of her omissions. Then, in reparation for her negligences, she offered to the Father all the most holy conversation of His Son, which was faultlessly perfect in all His thoughts, words, and deeds, from the hour when He was sent into the world, to the hour when He presented to His Father the glory of His victorious Flesh. In union with her thanksgiving she offered back to God what He had given, and, using the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a sweet-thrilling organ, she sounded it in the virtue of the Paraclete, and, accompanying it with her songs, she sang to God praises on behalf of all the creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, in the name of all beings who have ever been, are, or shall be" (VI. 5).

The habit of making this offering gives to our works the merit of the works of Jesus Christ. It also leads us to an intimate familiarity with our Lord. "From oblation," says Father Faber, "springs a more familiar, tender, and affectionate familiarity with God than could arise from petition only. The childlike freedom of the Saints comes in great measure from this spirit of oblation" (VI. 2).

This judicious and true remark may lead us to pass to another passage by the learned Oratorian, where he shows the independent spirit of St. Gertrude and of all the Benedictine School: "Wherever the law of the Lord is, where the Spirit of Christ is, there is liberty. No one can be at all acquainted with the old-fashioned Benedictine school of spiritual writers without perceiving and admiring the beautiful liberty of spirit which pervades and possesses their whole mind. It is just what we should expect from an order of such matured traditions. It were well if we had more reprints and translations of them. St. Gertrude is a fair specimen of them. She is thoroughly

Benedictine. . . . A spirit of breadth, a spirit of liberty, that is the Catholic Spirit; and it was eminently the badge of the old Benedictine ascetics of the old school. Modern writers, for the most part, have tightened things, and have lost by it, instead of gaining. By frightening people they have lessened devotion in extent, and by overstraining they have lowered it in degree.

"It is difficult to speak well of liberty of spirit without seeming to recommend negligence or to countenance unpunctuality, slovenliness, and caprice. But we may safely illustrate the matter from St. Gertrude herself.

"Oh, that she could be in the Church once more, as she was in ages past, the doctress and the prophetess of the interior life, like Debbora, who sat beneath her palm in Mount Ephraim, uttering her canticles and judging Israel" (*All for Jesus*, viii. 8).

CHAPTER XXII

ST. GERTRUDE'S DOCTRINE OF THE SACRED HEART: THE SACRED HEART IS THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

THE Word Incarnate is the natural Mediator between God and man. He is also the High Priest and eternal Pontiff. Under this double title He gives to God and He gives to man: to God glory, adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; to man grace, forgiveness, resurrection, and eternal life.

These sublime functions commenced on the day of His Incarnation; they continued during the whole of the life of the man-God; on Calvary, above all, they attained their full completion. The High-Priest gathered then into Himself all the homage rendered to His Father by the ancient sacrifices, and offered them in His Name. He, moreover, accompanied this offering with the shedding of His own Blood, and He, the man-God, became the Victim, the only one *par excellence*, worthy of Infinite Majesty.

At the same time He instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass, which throughout the centuries was to perpetuate and renew in every place the immolation of Calvary, and the adoration of the High-Priest and divine Victim. At the same time He obtained graces without number to regenerate the entire human race. He then created His hierarchy, His priests, His Martyrs, His Virgins, and His Confessors. He gave to the Sacraments their efficacy to transform our life and our death.

Without doubt the cross was the altar of sacrifice, the throne of mediation, the theatre of this new creation; but the centre from which rose the adoration offered to God and from which gushed the graces that reach even

us was the Sacred Heart of Jesus: *centrum crucis Cor Jesu.*

The Blood that bought our ransom issued from the Heart of Jesus; the Church also came from that divine Heart, His spotless, immaculate spouse; and from the Heart of Jesus also came the Sacraments and every grace. These two functions of the Sacred Heart did not cease with the *Consummatum est* of the Cross. He exercises them throughout all ages.

St. Gertrude understood in a marvellous manner this mission of the Sacred Heart: may we also by her teaching understand it as well.

It was the third Sunday of Advent. Our Lord deigned to raise her from a bed of suffering, even to heaven; He wished her to assist at a Mass that He Himself was celebrating. While they were singing the offertory the most holy Heart of our Lord seemed to leave His Sacred breast. It was under the form of a golden altar, and shone with a marvellous splendour as though on fire. Then all the Angels who were ordained to the service of men, taking their flight, came with great joy to offer on this altar of the Heart of our Lord all the good works and prayers accomplished by those in their charge. Then all the Saints drew near, each one offering his merits on this same altar to their Lord, to His eternal praise and for the salvation of Gertrude's soul. Last of all her guardian angel came, carrying a golden chalice, which he also offered on the golden altar of the divine Heart. This chalice contained all the sorrows, pains, and contradictions that that blessed soul had borne in her heart as well as in her body from her infancy. Our Lord at once blessed this chalice with the sign of the cross, as the priest does before consecrating the Host. Then He said with a most sweet voice *Sursum Corda,* and all the Saints at this invitation advanced and raised their hearts under the form of golden tubes, approaching them to the golden altar of the Sacred

Heart, and waiting until the chalice, blessed and consecrated by our Lord with so much affection, overflowed, so that they might gather some drops to increase their merits, their joy, and their glory.

Soon after our Lord, rising from His throne, seemed to offer to God His Father in His two hands His most Sacred Heart, which St. Gertrude had seen under the form of a golden altar. He offered it for His Church, a magnificent offering which no creature, however exalted, could ever comprehend.

While she saw the Son of God offer His divine Heart to God the Father, the convent bell rang for the Elevation, so that our Lord simultaneously performed the same action in heaven that was done on earth by the ministry of His priest. As St. Gertrude felt a great joy in witnessing so divine and admirable a marvel, our Lord made her a sign to say the *Pater Noster*. He wished it said in union with, and in remembrance of the long preparation this prayer had received in His most Sacred Heart, before it was taught with so much love to the faithful.

Our Lord then instructed St. Gertrude to pray for the Church. She began to pray for all in general and for each soul in particular. Our Lord then, in union with the pains and works of His holy humanity, bestowed all the fruit that such a prayer could obtain on the universal Church. He said to her: "This prayer thou hast just now offered for the universal Church shall be for it salvation *par excellence*, "the salvation of salvations," as says the Canticle of Canticles.

From this glorious vision we may learn a consoling truth: to adore worthily the Infinite Majesty of God, we are not left to our own weakness. The sacred Heart receives our acts of homage, offers them Itself, and thereby gives them an infinite value. How much happiness does a soul filled with love and desire for the glory of God find in this wonderful mystery!

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SACRED HEART, BEFORE THE FATHER, SUPPLIES FOR THE IMPERFECTION OF OUR PRAISE

NOT only does the Sacred Heart compensate for the poverty of our homage when we assist at the august Sacrifice, but it also supplies what is wanting to us when we sing the praises of God. The recitation of the Divine Office which the Church has imposed as a solemn duty on her priests, on all religious, and in particular on the children of St. Benedict, is also a sacrifice—*sacrificium laudis*—and, like the Holy Mass, is offered all over the Catholic world. The Sacred Heart adds the merit of its praise to ours, which is divine.

At the solemn feast of the most Holy Trinity St. Gertrude recited in its honour this prayer: "Glory to Thee, O most excellent, most glorious, most noble, most sweet, most gracious, always unchangeable and ineffable Trinity: one and the same God from all eternity now and for ever."

As she offered this praise to God, the Son of God appeared to her in His humanity (in which He is less than the Father), and stood in the presence of the adorable Trinity. Gertrude understood the meaning of this vision: man's weakness was so great as to be incapable of attaining to the perfection of perfect praise required by the Most Blessed Trinity, so our Lord in His sacred humanity took to Himself our feeble efforts which, being joined to His, were raised in merit and offered by Him as a worthy holocaust to the supreme and undivided Trinity.

When they began Vespers the Son of God offered His sweet and most precious Heart under the form of a lyre in the presence of the glorious Trinity. On this lyre all the prayers and every word chanted on this feast were

re-echoed before God. The chanting of the religious who were tepid seemed only to produce a dull murmur of inferior notes, but the chanting of those who fervently wished to praise the Holy Trinity seemed to sound on the Sacred Heart of our Lord as most sweet notes, producing an entrancing and melodious chant.

Happy the priest, the religious, or the Christian who can take possession of the Heart of Jesus and with it praise the most Holy Trinity. He induces the Holy Trinity to lean towards the Heart of Jesus and to receive its perfect praise.

While they sang the anthem of Lauds *Te jure laudant*, Gertrude put her whole heart into it to praise the adorable Trinity; she hoped, if possible, during her agony to sing with so much devotion as to consume her strength and lose her life in praising God. Then the most Holy Trinity, always unchangeable in Its radiant Majesty, seemed to incline with love and tenderness towards the divine Heart, which was giving out in Its presence, as a melodious lyre, sweet-sounding music. The most Holy Trinity gave it three strings, which, by the invincible power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the goodness of the Holy Spirit, would uninterruptedly supply all that was wanting to the soul according to the will of the most Holy Trinity.

Which of us would not wish to have at his disposal these three cords which make the divine Heart vibrate? It is certainly not by a beautiful voice that this favour is obtained, but by fervent devotion. Weakness, which, without entirely closing the lips, makes our chanting imperfect, is not an obstacle. Gertrude tried to sing each word and every note with a pure intention, but she could not succeed owing to her natural weakness. She then said sorrowfully: "What good can I obtain from these efforts when I am so inconstant?" But our Lord, who could not bear that she should be sad, offered to her

with His own hands His most holy Heart, saying: "See with the eyes of thy soul here before thee My divine Heart, mouthpiece of the Adorable Trinity; do thou apply to it, with full confidence, that it may supply what thou canst not accomplish thyself. As a faithful servant is always ready to do the will of his Master, so my divine Heart will always be ready to repair every moment thy negligences." The Sacred Heart became Gertrude's servant to repair her negligences! She considered it altogether too unbecoming that the Heart of our Lord, the most precious treasure of the divinity, which possesses all things, should supply for her infidelities and feebleness, as a servant at his master's orders. Our Lord therefore made her thus understand His thoughts: "If thou hadst a flexible and sweet voice, wouldst thou not be pleased to have it rather than a disagreeable and discordant one? Well, that is also the case with my divine Heart: it knows the weakness and inconstancy of man, and wishes with an incredible desire that thou wouldst invite it, if not by words, at least by some sign, to take thy place and do for thee what of thyself thou art quite incapable of doing. Thou knowest that there are at thy service My omnipotent power and infinite wisdom. My natural goodness and kindness make Me only have one wish, and that is to do this for thee with joy and delight."

O Sacred Heart, we will not refuse Thy help! Come and supply all that is defective in the recitation of the Divine Office.

Our Lord one day gave a lesson to Gertrude through the enemy of mankind. It will perhaps be of more use to us than to the holy Benedictine. She was reciting the office carelessly; and close to her she saw the Devil, mocking her as he finished the psalm *Mirabilia testimonia tua*. He did it as though fainting, clipping some syllables from each word in a hurry. After having finished the

verse, he said to her: " Thy Creator, Saviour and Beloved has well bestowed His graces ! Thou sayest and wishest different things, but speakest to Him with so much precipitation that in this psalm thou hast missed all these letters, syllables, and words." She understood from this how this cunning enemy had counted exactly and in particular all the letters and syllables of this psalm, and after death would bring a terrible accusation against those who habitually recited the office hurriedly and without attention.

Let us therefore sing the psalms for the glory of God with the same devotion that Gertrude habitually brought to this work; and the words which leave our lips and hearts will speed like sharp-pointed arrows towards the Heart of Jesus, penetrating it profoundly, moving it with great joy, causing great graces to fall on us and giving glory to the Saints.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SACRED HEART, MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, GIVES GRACES TO MEN

THE second function of the Sacred Heart as Mediator between God and man is to intercede for us and obtain graces for us. Our Lord did it on the cross, He still does it in heaven, and He will continue to do it until the end of the world.

On Good Friday, when they were reading in the Passion that Joseph carried away the Body of Jesus, Gertrude said to our Lord: "To Joseph was granted to have in his hands Thy most holy Body. Lord, what wilt Thou give me, notwithstanding my unworthiness?" At once our Lord offered her His Heart under the appearance of a golden thurible; waves of very sweet-smelling incense rose from it towards the Father, a different wave for every species of men ransomed by our Lord's death. Then, when the prayers were recited for all the different degrees of persons in the Church, their prayers seemed blended and all rose together with the incense from the divine Heart, and this union gave them a marvellous brilliancy and a delicious perfume. Gertrude finished in saying: "Let each one apply himself, therefore, on this day to praying with more devotion for the Church in union with the Passion of Jesus Christ, as the Passion gives so much more value to our prayers before God the Father."

This mediation of the Sacred Heart in our favour is not a transitory act which is repeated at intervals; it is perpetual. Our Lord made His spouse understand this in a sermon He addressed to her Himself.

"Thou knowest, my Well-Beloved," she said to Him one day, "how much I should like to listen to the sermon if I were not kept away by sickness." Our Lord then said: "Wouldst thou, beloved, that I should preach to thee Myself?" "Very willingly," she said. Then our Lord made her rest on His Heart so that her soul was entirely united to it. After a few moments of sweet repose, she felt in the Heart of our Lord two admirable beatings of extreme sweetness, and our Lord said to her: "Each of these beatings operates the salvation of man in three ways. The first beating operates the salvation of sinners, the second that of the just. By the first beating: 1st, I speak unceasingly to God the Father, appeasing Him appropriately on behalf of sinners and moving Him to have mercy. 2nd, I then address the Saints, and after having excused the excesses of sinners with all the zeal and fidelity of a brother, I urge them to pray for them. 3rd, I turn to the sinner himself, I mercifully call upon him to do penance, and I await, with incredible desires, his conversion.

"By this second beating: 1st, I turn to God the Father, inviting Him to rejoice with Me, because I have employed so usefully the price of My Blood, shed for the ransom of the just, and also that I have the joy to find in their hearts such a variety of pleasures. 2nd, I then speak to all the celestial company, so that all may praise the lives of the just, which are so worthy of praise, and that they may thank Me for all the blessings they have ever received, or shall receive, from Me. 3rd, I turn to the just themselves, showering on them graces for their salvation, and urging them to advance faithfully day by day and hour by hour. The beatings of man's heart are not impeded by the work done by his sight, hearing, or hands, but it continues always its beating. In the same way the government of heaven and earth and the guiding of the universe could never, even for a moment, suspend this double beating

of My divine Heart, neither could they lessen it or impede it in any manner whatever."

And so we are all of us, in the Sacred Heart the object of its ineffable beatings. We are there to be presented to His Father, to be recommended to the Saints, and to be urged to conversion or perseverance.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SACRED HEART IS THE SOURCE OF GRACE AND OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

IN her Liturgy the Church compares the Sacred Heart to an ocean. She cries: "My soul sighs for the Heart of my Lord; God has placed therein, as in a chosen vessel, all the waters of the ocean, and the depths of grace and riches."

And as God calls Himself the "Ocean of Being" (*Pelagus essentiæ*), so the Heart of Jesus is called the Ocean of graces (*Pelagus gratiarum*). He is the source of all grace as the ocean is the source of all the waters; and these immense waters are all in Him, with their loud sounds, their mighty comings and goings, their astonishing power, and their inexhaustible fecundity (Baudry, 38).

But how shall we draw from this ocean the waters it contains to pour them into our souls?

On the Sunday of *Quasimodo* (Low Sunday), when the Gospel tells us our Lord breathed on His disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit, Gertrude prayed our Lord with great devotion to send her also this Spirit of mildness. Our Lord replied, "If thou desirest to receive the Holy Spirit, thou must first touch My side and My hands."

By these words she understood that he who desires to receive the Holy Spirit should first touch the side of Jesus Christ by considering with gratitude the love of the Heart of our God; by which love He has predestined us from all eternity to be His children and heirs to His kingdom. We must also consider how He prevents us unceasingly with all sorts of blessings, and by His graces even pursues the ungrateful. In the same manner we must touch our Lord's hands—that is, remember grate-

fully the works of our redemption in which our Lord laboured thirty-three years for love of us, and above all in His Passion and death. When this remembrance has enkindled our love, we must offer our hearts to God in union with the love which made our Lord say: "As My Father hath sent Me, so I send you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xv. 21). And this for all that it shall please God to send us. When all this is done we may receive the Holy Spirit with the same dispositions as the disciples when they received it by the breath of the Son of God. So to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit it is enough to touch the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to remember His benefits. Here is the proof.

On the eve of Pentecost Gertrude prayed devoutly during the Divine Office that she might be prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then she heard our Lord say to her: "You will receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you" (Acts i. 8). Our Lord's words filled her with great joy, and she began to consider with profound humility how unworthy she was of so great a grace.

It seemed as if this thought of her own unworthiness impressed her all the more deeply because she thought herself a most vile creature. From the Heart of the Son of God she then saw a stream flowing pure and sweet as a honeycomb; little by little it filled to the brim the abyss made in her own heart by her profound humility. She undertsood that in this was signified the sweetness of the divine Consoler, which flows gently through the Heart of Jesus into the hearts of the elect. The Son of God then, with His divine hand, blesses this abyss as if it were a font; and each time that the soul plunges into it all stains are washed away, and it is made pleasing to God.

The next day, while they sang the *Veni Creator* at Terce, our Lord appeared to her. With His two hands

He seemed to open before her His heart filled with gentleness. She fell on her knees and her head rested on His Sacred Heart. Our Lord, taking hold of her head, seemed to enclose it in His divine Heart. He united to Himself her will, which is called the head of the soul, and sanctified it in Himself.

At the second verse, *Qui diceris Paraclitus*, obeying our Lord's wish, she placed her two hands on His divine Heart, and obtained in this way the help of divine consolation in all her works; in future all of them would perfectly please our Lord

At the third verse, *Tu septiformis munere*, she placed her feet on the Heart of our Lord, and merited by that the sanctification of all her desires which are signified by the feet.

At the fourth verse, *Accende lumen sensibus*, she recommended all her senses to our Lord. She was promised that her senses should all be enlightened, and that others would receive great graces and fervour in the love of God.

At the fifth verse, *Hostem repellas longius*, our Lord leaned over her, embracing her tenderly. This was as a strong shield to keep away from her all darts of the Evil One. Gertrude felt so great a sweetness and strength that she recognized the full accomplishment of what had been said to her on the eve: " You will receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SACRED HEART AND SINNERS

GERTRUDE has repeated faithfully to us the sermon preached to her by our Lord; but cannot sinners act towards our Lord as He Himself acted towards the disciple who had denied Him? "Peter, lovest thou Me?" our Saviour insisted again and yet again; when He stopped, convinced by the tears of His Vicar. Cannot sinners also insist and say: "O Sacred Heart, lovest Thou me?" and again, "Sacred Heart, lovest Thou me?" and yet again, "Sacred Heart, lovest Thou me?"

One day Gertrude was trying to think which of the different favours she had received from God would be the most useful for men's spiritual advancement. Our Lord joined Himself to her thoughts and desires and gave her the answer, which we incorrigible sinners would desire.

"It would be useful for men to know the advantage they will derive from remembering constantly that I, the Son of the Virgin, stand always before God the Father, so that if they should, through human weakness, commit a sin, I offer God My spotless Heart for them; if they sin again, I offer Him My pierced hands; and it is the same for all the other sins they commit; My innocence appeases the Father's anger. If they remember this, they will repent and without difficulty obtain forgiveness. For this reason I desire that My elect, when they have had their sins forgiven, should render Me continual thanksgiving because they have been so easily heard." Under the influence of these words the gentle friend of the Sacred Heart excited all the souls she knew to great confidence.

In order to encourage her in this work of mercy, our Lord said to her on the feast of the Dedication: "So that thou mayest know, and have no more doubts, I wish thee to see with what goodness I receive a soul which has sinned but repented and returned to Me, grieved for the sin, and purposing with My help to avoid sin in future."

In saying this, the Son of the Supreme King, clothed with the robes of His sovereignty, advanced before the throne of God the Father, singing the happiness of the elect. Gertrude understood with what immense delight the divine Heart is filled whenever a sinner sorrowfully acknowledges the sins of unrestrained words or bad and useless acts by which he has strayed from his Lord, when he firmly purposes to avoid similar faults in future. As often as he does this the Son of God feels in His Heart another transport of joy and happiness. The Son of God keeps in His Heart the words that the sinner in his compunction repeats: "Alas! miserable I am indeed, how much time have I lost, forgetting the God who loves me." The Son of God then feels His Heart thrill, and calls out with joy: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men!" So the sinner who, touched with sorrow, purposes of his free and entire will to renounce sin for the future, becomes truly a tabernacle in which our Lord deigns to dwell as in His own home.

God the Father ratifies this transformation by His blessing—*Ecce nova facio omnia* ("Behold I make all things new"). By this is meant that the contrition of the sinner and the blessing of God, united to the merits of the Son of God, supply and renew in the converted soul all that is needed. This explains the joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, a greater joy than that for the ninety and nine who need not penance. For God's extreme goodness causes Him to find joy in a soul really penitent.

Inspired by these visions, Gertrude prayed and com-

municated for sinners. One day when she was preparing to go to Holy Communion our Lord said these loving words to her: " I cover Myself with thee, so that I may stretch out My delicate hand, without tearing it with the thorns which surround the sinners I wish to help. Then I cover thee with Myself, so that I may raise higher all those for whom thou dost pray, and for all who are of thy nature, so that I may shower graces upon them according to My royal munificence."

During Lent she had prayed much for the souls of poor sinners, so that our Lord would deign to reclothe them with His merits.

On the fourth Sunday she supplicated our Lord to show her how she might work for His glory. He answered her: " Make those enter whom thou hast prepared and adorned during these last seven days, for they will eat with Me." She then said: " How can I do this? If it were possible, my Lord, that I, unworthy as I am, could conduct all men, in whom Thou dost take delight, to Thee, I would willingly go barefoot for this work from now till the day of judgment through the entire world; all those that I should see, sweet Consoler of my soul, in whom Thou wouldst seek Thy delight, I would take into my arms and bring them to Thee, so that even in so little I might satisfy the infinite desires of Thy divine love. And, moreover, if that were possible, I would divide my heart into as many parts as there are living men, so as to give to each one the necessary good-will to obey in whatever is most pleasing to Thy divine Heart." Our Lord replied: " Such a loving and perfect desire from thee suffices for all."

A difficulty may sometimes come to our minds when we are asked to pray for sinners. How can we pray for the salvation of others when our own is in so much danger through our sins? The solution of this difficulty by our Lord Himself reveals to us the delicacy of His merciful

Heart. "As it is impossible," He says, "that a person should have his feet pierced without feeling it in his heart, so it is impossible for my fatherly tenderness not to look with a merciful eye on him who, though laden with his own defects and knowing how much need he has of help and forgiveness, yet by charity continues to beg for the salvation of his neighbour."

CHAPTER XXVII

DESPAIRING SINNERS

TRUE zeal makes no exception with regard to what kind of sinner it labours for. The Sacred Heart wills all to be saved and begs fervent prayer for all. Who does not feel sometimes tempted to call down punishment from heaven on persecutors, or at least to exclude them from our prayers? The Sacred Heart would not approve.

Gertrude prayed for those who troubled the peace of the monastery. Our good and merciful Lord appeared to her suffering much in one arm, which was violently drawn backward. He said to her: "See what pain is caused Me by blows on My arm; the same pain is given me by those who, having no pity for the damnation incurred by your persecutors, do nothing but relate again and again their evil acts and the harm they have caused: they forget that they also are My members.

"On the contrary, all those who, touched by compassion, implore My clemency, so that in My mercy I should lead them from their evil life to a good one, they only apply a soothing lotion to My pain. And those who by advice and warning kindly guide them to amendment and reconciliation with Me resemble clever surgeons who by skilful and gentle means might restore My arm to its proper position."

Filled with admiration for the wonderful goodness of the Heart of Jesus, she said: "But why, O most merciful Lord, do you compare your arm to such great sinners?" Our Lord replied: "Because they are members of the body of the Church of which I glory in being the Head." "She continued: "But, Lord, they are already separated by excommunication from the body of the Church;

the robberies they have committed have caused them to be excommunicated and denounced." Our Lord replied: "That is true; but as they may be reconciled to the Church by absolution, My goodness obliges Me to care for them and to desire with an ardent longing that they may be converted and return to Me by penance."

This dialogue between our Lord and St. Gertrude reminds us of that between Almighty God and Abraham when Sodom was destroyed; with this difference, that then it was Abraham who pleaded for the guilty, and now it is the Sacred Heart. And, probably, we have not yet seen how far His infinite Mercy will stretch.

Through the fervent prayers of St. Gertrude and her sisters our Lord had delivered a certain number of souls from Purgatory. When receiving Holy Communion, Gertrude begged our Lord to anticipate the time when He would bestow the necessary grace on all those who were to be saved, for she thought it too presumptuous to pray for those who would be lost.

Our Lord reproved her for her pusillanimity, and said: "Dost thou not think that the presence of My Body and Precious Blood is powerful enough to merit that even those who are in a state of damnation should return to a better life?" Gertrude considering what marvellous goodness there was in these words, replied: "As Thy inexhaustible goodness deigns to listen to my unworthy prayers, I supplicate Thy majesty, in union with the love and desires of all these creatures, that Thou wouldst grant to me the conversion of as many souls that are living now in sin as Thou hast delivered to-day from Purgatory, so that they may obtain Thy grace, whoever they may be, and in whatsoever place may be found those for whom Thou wouldst have me pray. I do not choose any of my own, neither friends, parents, nor relatives." Our Lord graciously accepted this

prayer, giving her the assurance that it should be granted, for confidence alone can easily obtain all.

Our Lord continued always to pursue sinners with His grace, but above all when they were in their agony, His love made its greatest effort. "When I see those in their agony, who at some time have had some loving remembrance of Me, or who have done some meritorious action before the end, I show myself so good, tender and kind to them that they repent with their whole heart of having offended Me, and through this repentance are saved.

"So I would, for this excessive goodness, that My elect should glorify Me, and that with other thanksgivings I should receive special ones for this."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SACRED HEART INVITES THE LITTLE ONES AND THE IGNORANT TO COME TO IT

I THANK Thee, Father, that Thou hast hidden Thy secrets from the wise and revealed them to little ones.

The secrets of divine love hidden in the Sacred Heart are the heritage of little ones. It has been said that devotion to the Sacred Heart is only suitable for those who are aiming at perfection. Certainly, some of the practices taught to show our devotion are more easy for those who have leisure and a more developed religious education, but it would be a crime to put a barrier between our Lord's loving Heart and the ignorant who cannot read, or the workman whose life is spent in incessant labour. Have they no heart with which to understand the Heart of Jesus? Have they no love to offer Him? Have they not their sweat and their labour to consecrate to Him? The Sacred Heart invites them all, and wishes to enrich them with the treasures of His love and mercy.

Jesus shows us Himself the place He would have them occupy: "If I only took pleasure in spiritual exercises, I should have reformed human nature after the fall; it should have had no need of food or clothing, nor of any of the other necessaries of life which demand so much labour from man, either to procure or to make. But a powerful king is not satisfied to have only at his court ladies and young damsels of distinction, richly dressed; he also wishes to have princes, dukes, soldiers, and servants for different duties, who in his palace would be always ready to be employed in various ways. So I do not desire only interior exercises of contemplation, but the different

occupations dealing with useful duties, in which My honour and love are sought; these induce Me to stay and take My delight among the children of men: they will find in these things better opportunities of practising charity, patience, humility, and other virtues."

The workman is busy from morning till night, and wears himself out in ceaseless labour. Can he be the Sacred Heart's friend? Let him listen to the following: "His body, which is so often spent and weary for Me, through his work, will serve Me as a safe place in which to store My riches, and I will hide in it as many pieces of silver as he makes efforts to fulfil his duty. His heart shall be My strong-box; I will take pleasure in depositing there a piece of gold for every time that for love of Me he thinks of providing for the needs of those who depend on him."

"But, Lord," we might say with St. Gertrude, "this man does not seem to me so perfect, and I much doubt if all he undertakes is for Thy glory. I rather incline to think he is actuated by other motives, such as some temporal gain and his bodily comfort. How then, O my God, canst Thou, who art ineffable sweetness, find, as Thou hast told us, delight in his soul and body?"

The Sacred Heart in His reply discloses to us another of His loving thoughts, so deliciously merciful: "His will is so submissive to My divine will that I am always the principal end of all his actions; therefore from all his sufferings, words and actions he reaps precious fruits. Nevertheless, if in each action he had a more pure intention he would raise and ennoble it in the same degree as gold is more precious than silver. So also if he offered to Me with a greater purity of intention his thoughts and his anxieties they would become so much more beautiful and pleasing to Me as gold pure and refined is more beautiful than gold old and tarnished."

The evening of life arrives for the workman, and his

arms, which since his youth have furnished the daily bread for him and for his family, now refuse to work longer. Too often he is reduced to poverty, he may have to beg, and sometimes has to beg a bed in a hospital in which to die.

The Heart of Jesus watches over this old servant, and renders him a hundredfold in his time of suffering for the tokens of devotion and fidelity He received from Him during the time of his health and strength.

"I am," He says, "the true friend whose fidelity does not grow weaker with age. When a person is deprived of all help, of all human consolation, and is brought to the last extremity of misery, he who in past times has received many proofs of devotedness from him is filled with sorrow at the sight. But I, true friend, at this painful time, I come to this desolate soul with an early spring blossoming of all the good works that it has performed during its life in thought, word, or act, and I adorn My garments as with roses and lilies, fresh and pure. In this freshness, full of life, which reveals My divine power, the soul reawakens to hope in the eternal life to which it sees itself invited, there to be rewarded for all its works, and the joy it receives enables it, after the death of the body, to attain eternal happiness."

The Sacred Heart is also near the workman in the accidents which may befall him, as He is near the soldier in his struggle.

One day a person got hurt at her work. Gertrude was much distressed, and prayed our Lord that the wounded member, hurt in legitimate work, might not have to be amputated. Our Lord thus graciously replied:

"There is no danger; but she will receive a reward for this pain, and all the other members who tried to relieve the wounded one and cure it shall also receive an eternal reward. As when one tries to dye a piece of cloth in saffron everything else that falls into the dye will also

be coloured, so also when one member suffers all the others who try to help will be rewarded eternally."

Gertrude then said: "My Lord, how can the members who mutually help each other gain merit, as they do not do it so that the wounded member may suffer more patiently or with greater love for Thee, but only in order to cause less suffering?" And our Lord's reply should give us great consolation: "After a remedy has been applied to a wound, the pain, which has still to be borne with patience for My love, without any other alleviation being possible, has been sanctified by the words which in the extremity of My agony I addressed to My Father, 'Father, if it is possible let this chalice pass from Me,' and by them great merit and reward are acquired."

Then workmen, the ignorant, and the poor may accept for themselves the kind of conduct traced by the Sacred Heart for a person in their condition; they will find therein the secret of pleasing Him.

"I have not chosen her (*i.e.*, the workwoman) to serve Me for one hour only, but to be with Me all day—that is to say, that she should perform all her actions for My glory in the same way as she would say her prayers. She must add devotedness to this, so that in all her duties she may desire that those who are benefited by her labour not only to receive help in their bodily concerns, but also to be drawn to My love and to all that is good. Every time she acts thus, her works and labours will be for Me as food she has perfectly prepared, the taste of which she has wonderfully improved by seasoning."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SACRED HEART AND PIOUS SOULS

THERE are souls for whom the keeping of the Commandments is not enough; they wish to add the observance of the counsels; privileged souls, upon whom Jesus looks with tenderness, called by His Sacred Heart to a perfect life. These souls must make their nest in the hole of the wall of the holy side of our Lord; they must rest there, drawing honey out of the stone, sweetness out of the deified Heart of Jesus.

The more devoted they are to the Heart of Jesus, the more perfect they will become. Our Lord caused St. Gertrude to understand this. She prayed for those who had been recommended to her. Our Lord said: "I have given to each a golden tube by which they can draw all they desire from the depths of my divine Heart." The tube is our good-will. Gertrude saw that those who surrounded our Lord drew divine grace into themselves with all their strength, some directly from the divine Heart, and others from our Lord's hands. But the further they withdrew from the Sacred Heart, the greater difficulty they had in obtaining what they sought, and, on the contrary, the more they tried to draw what they desired direct from the Sacred Heart, the more abundantly, sweetly, and easily they obtained it.

Our Lord at the same time taught St. Gertrude the nature of the devotion that pious souls ought to practise towards His Sacred Heart. It was to be a complete devotedness, or the gift of their entire will.

In order to draw grace direct from the Heart of our Lord, we must conform and submit our will to His; we must desire above all that the most holy will of God should be accomplished fully in our regard, in spiritual

as well as in temporal things. Those who do this have great power in obtaining what they wish for from our Lord. At the appointed time they will receive into their hearts a torrent of divine grace, with so much the more abundance and joy as they have been entirely submissive to His will. When Jesus Christ is thus sought, so that He may always be pleased, in His turn He takes His pleasure in that soul.

" Alas ! my adorable Lord, what canst Thou find in me, the lowest of all creatures, that can give Thee pleasure ?"

Our Lord replied: " My divine eyes rest particularly on thee, for I have made thee very pleasing to Myself by the graces and favours I bestowed on thee in creating thee. My divine ears also receive as sounds of the sweetest harmony all the words of love that thou sayest to Me; also when thou dost pray for sinners or for the souls in Purgatory; when thou dost correct or instruct others, or whenever thou dost say a word for My love.

" Even when it might seem of no use to anyone and without fruit, yet because of thy good-will and purity of intention, which only has Me for its object, thy words sound sweetly in my ears and touch Me to the depths of my Heart.

" In the same way the hope that causes thee to sigh unceasingly for Me gives forth a fragrant perfume which I breathe with pleasure. Thy sighs and desires are more agreeable to Me than the most exquisite scents. I also find in thy love the charm of the sweetest embrace."

An objection might present itself to these words of our Lord—Do they only concern St. Gertrude, or may they also apply to us ? Listen: " It is love that satisfies for all." On hearing these words the Saint understood that if in the world love has so much power that even ugly people please those who love them, and so much so that they would willingly resemble those they love,

how can we doubt that God, who is love itself, cannot, through His love, make those whom He loves pleasing in His eyes?

O my God! unfold all the power of Thy love, and then look on me, for if I am so full of faults in my own eyes, what can I be in Thine, unless Thou lovest Me?

CHAPTER XXX

THE SACRED HEART AND CONSECRATED SOULS

IN the secrets of His infinite mercy our Lord deigns to cast His eyes on certain privileged souls. He invites them to leave the world and renounce earthly joys in order to consecrate themselves entirely to His love and service. Blessed and happy are souls, prevented by so great a love! Let them respond with joy to the call of the Sacred Heart, giving themselves up to be formed by it to a perfect life. It will have an infinite tenderness for them, but will also ask much.

The tenderness of the Sacred Heart for consecrated souls is depicted for us with exquisite delicacy by St. Gertrude in the *Book of the Exercises* and in the *Book of her Revelations.*

Love bears to the future spouse of Christ the invitation of the Celestial King:

"Arise, O Soul; wouldst thou, then, still sleep? Listen to the message I bring thee. Beyond the sky lives a King who desires to possess thee. His Heart longs for thee, He loves thee without measure. His love is so tender and faithful that He has left His kingdom and lowered Himself for thee. He sought thee, and in the search He permitted them to arrest Him as a thief. He loves thee so tenderly, with so much devotedness, and is so anxious to give thee the proof, that He has delivered His beautiful Body to death for thy sake without regret. He has washed thee with His blood and ransomed thee by His death. Must He still wait longer for thy heart to turn to Him? Has He not bought Thee and thy love at a high price? If thou wilt only accept His terms

He is anxious to make thee His spouse; make haste, then, to show Him thy desires" (Exercise III.).

The soul, moved but troubled by so great an honour, draws back and cries out:

"I am only an orphan without a mother, poor and stripped of all. Apart from Jesus there is no consolation for me. He alone can assuage the thirst of my soul. Him alone has my heart chosen for its only love. Oh, who will give me to be like His Heart, so that He may find in me what He seeks, something that may correspond to the loving choice He has made of me? Then alone can I taste joy and consolation."

This message brought by love, and the answer given by the young Christian, remain for some time a profound secret. Then the decision taken before the altar must be made known. Often a long and sorrowful trial awaits the young betrothed of the Sacred Heart! All are anxious to keep her in the world, and from her prison she constantly repeats:

"Oh, Jesus, full of love, who will give me the wings of a dove? I would then fly in the strength of my desires to repose in Thee" (Exercise II.).

After many trials she at last obtains her desire and enters the House of our Lord to live only for His service. In entering holy religion it is into the Sacred Heart that she wishes to enter.

"O beloved Jesus! by the love which caused Thee, being God, to become man, so as to seek and save that which was lost, come now into me, my Well-Beloved, and make me enter into Thee. Hide me in the impregnable fortress of Thy paternal care. Draw me far away from all that is not Thee, into the opening of Thy Sacred Heart. O Thou, the dearest of all that are loved! give me an inheritance among Thy people Israel and admit me among the daughters of Jerusalem, who form part of Thy court. Teach my heart to be like Thy Heart,

and then my whole life will pass according to Thy good pleasure."

The spouse of Christ sees a grating placed before her by the Church. This separates her for ever from the world. The Sacred Heart prepares for her a sweeter cloister which isolates her much more.

"Look at My Heart! It is thy dwelling. Examine also the other members of My Body, and choose those which seem to thee the most suitable to live in, in order that thou mayest make My Body a cloister to dwell in."

At this invitation Gertrude replied: "Lord, I know not what more I could choose, for I have found so much delight in Thy Heart, which Thou hast called my dwelling, that I cannot leave it to take rest or food, two necessary things."

Then our Lord said: "If it pleases thee thou canst even find those two things in My Heart. Thou hast heard of persons, like St. Dominic, who never left the church, but ate and even slept there. In the meantime choose in My Body what may serve thee as a monastery."

Then, to obey our Lord, Gertrude chose our Lord's feet for walking, our Lord's hands for working, our Lord's mouth for speaking, our Lord's eyes for studying or reading, and our Lord's ears for confessing.

After each fault she was instructed to go up to the tribunal of the Sacred Heart, expressed by those five words: "I, miserable, poor, wicked and unworthy sinner, come to Thee, abyss of infinite goodness, to be cleansed from every stain and purified from every sin."

The Consecration of Virgins to the Sacred Heart

At last the day, blessed among all, dawns for the happy betrothed of the Sacred Heart. Having borne the trials of the novitiate, she is judged worthy to become the

spouse of the Beloved of her heart. For St. Gertrude such a ceremony would be a true consecration to the divine Heart, we may judge from the following:

Ecce Sponsus venit. "O Lord of my heart! several times I have heard these words: 'Behold the Spouse comes'; tell me, therefore, how Thou dost come and what Thou dost bring with Thee, for me?" Our Lord said: "I will work with thee and in thee. Where is thy lamp?" St. Gertrude replied: "Behold my heart; it shall serve as a lamp," and our Lord continued: "And I will fill it with the oil from my Heart."

And the young virgin advances and pronounces the words of the Liturgy for the consecration of the spouse of Christ:

R. I have despised the kingdoms of this world and the pomps of the world for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, whom I have chosen.

V. My heart hath uttered a good word. I speak of my works for the King.

What takes place at this time in the heart of the virgin and in that of Jesus? St. Gertrude will interpret for us both.

Thoughts of a Virgin Consecrating Herself to Jesus Christ

"What have I in future in this world, O my Jesus? Even in heaven I desire nothing but Thee. Thee only do I love, Thee only do I desire, for Thee only do I thirst. Thee only I cherish. When I allow myself to think only of Thee I almost faint away, my Beloved. Carry me into the centre of the furnace of love which burns in Thee. Unite me to Thee so closely, even in this life, that in the very moment in which I leave my body I may at once find in Thee supreme happiness for eternity.

"But what am I, O my God! O life of my soul! Alas! what an infinite distance between Thee and me! I am as a grain of dust that the wind raises from the ground. Send, therefore, on me the burning wind of Thy love; may Thy Holy Spirit as a whirlwind lift me up and cast me into Thy merciful bosom, and do Thou receive me. There only shall I really be detached from myself; there only shall I leave myself to live in Thee, O my only love! There I will leave myself for ever, so that no trace may remain of me, as specks of dust disappear unnoticed.

"In uniting me to Thyself transform me so entirely that my imperfections may be annihilated, and that I shall have no life out of Thee. Grant that I may lose myself so completely in Thee that for all eternity I shall never find myself except in Thee."

It was not enough for Gertrude to lose and transform herself in the Heart of Jesus; she wished to be entirely consumed therein.

"What am I, O my God, O love of my heart? Oh, how little do I resemble Thee! In goodness I am an almost imperceptible drop, and Thou art an ocean overflowing with tenderness. O Love, Love, teach me Thy compassion; pour down on me the cataracts of Thy paternal kindness, make all the springs of the great deep and all the reservoirs of Thy infinite goodness flow down on me. Absorb me into the depth of Thy charity, drown me for ever in the ocean of Thy tender love. This love in its strength is like a deluge; may I disappear under its waters as a feeble spark is extinguished on falling into the sea. May I die, carried away by the inundation of Thy immeasurable mercy, as a living coal under the impetuous waves of an overflowing river. Thy love is like heavy rain; grant that I may be drenched. Thy love is a drink; may it take me out of life; may it accomplish in me the designs of Thy merciful wisdom, making me die a glorious death; for it would be to die of love, of that love which is

life. For I would willingly lose my own life in Thine, which is eternal, O my Love, O God of my life !"

On the day of religious profession the funeral pall is stretched over the virgin who has just died to the world so that she may live only for Jesus Christ. Gertrude offers her the Sacred Heart for a dwelling-place.

" What am I, O my God, Thou sacred Object of all my desires ? Alas ! alas ! I am the refuse of creatures, but Thou art for me the fount of boundless confidence. In Thee is the inexhaustible treasure with which I can pay all my debts. O Love ! Love ! Love ! accumulate for me all the riches of Thy indulgent goodness. Weigh me down under the load of Thy love and compassion. May my last sigh lose itself in the breath of Thy divine Spirit ! May I sleep in the shadow of Thy love, spread over me as a veil ! My life consists in tasting Thy sweetness; may it be breathed forth into Thy bosom, so that, leaving myself, I may pass sweetly into Thee. O Thou who art my only delight ! may I faint away in Thy embrace, and may it be my only happiness ! In this tomb of love wrap me in Thy precious redemption as in a shroud; embalm me with the rich perfumes of Thy death; place me in Thy Heart pierced by the lance as in a sepulchre of precious marble. May Thy look, so full of sweetness, cover and protect me as the stone of this precious tomb, and may I remain thus under Thy care for all eternity."

The Feelings of the Sacred Heart for its Betrothed.

When a soul gives itself over to these feelings of love, either on the day or anniversary of its profession, St. Gertrude tells us that the Sacred Heart is profoundly touched, so that it cannot restrain the expression of its joy. " Yes," our Lord cried out before His Father and before all the Saints; " I acknowledge that I owe these chaste spouses a great reward for the faithful service they render to Me according to their strength."

" Our Lord," says St. Gertrude, " acknowledges Himself to be their debtor. He promises them graces of salvation, graces of predilection. He protests before His Father that, for His love, they have professed the Catholic Faith by the works of justice. He promises that, in heaven, they shall receive the reward of martyrs, for this confession of their faith and also for all the indulgences they refused to their senses, to their eyes, their taste, their hearing, the pleasure of going abroad and of conversing with others, etc." (IV. 54).

CHAPTER XXXI

THE DEMANDS OF THE SACRED HEART

THE Sacred Heart of Jesus wishes His spouses to be entirely His. He wants their heart with all its affections. He wants their will, that it may be entirely subject to His. For this reason He insists with St. Gertrude, and later with St. Margaret Mary, that religious should submit to their rule as to the expression of the divine will, and respect their Superiors as the living representatives of His authority.

On the Feast of the Circumcision Gertrude said to our Lord: "In Thy goodness, O merciful Father, do not forget, on this day of Thy holy Circumcision, to destroy all my defects." Our Lord replied: "In all let the observance of rule replace circumcision." "Grant us, then, O loving Lord," she answered, "the help of Thy grace, for without Thee, as Thou knowest well, we can do nothing."

Touched by these words, which penetrated His Heart with the sweetness of honey, our Lord caused Gertrude's soul to rest on His Heart, saying: "I will willingly labour with thee in that. If anyone for My glory and love applies himself on this first day of the year to going over in his mind with sincere compunction of heart all the points he has failed to keep in his rule, and to seeing how he intends for the future to avoid such faults, I shall be near him as a kind Master who shows a dear pupil on his knee the place with his finger, teaching him to read, correcting his mistakes, and supplying what he needs. I shall mercifully forgive all his faults and paternally repair what he neglects. And if, as a child whose mind wanders, he passes over some things without noticing

them, I shall pay attention for him and make good his oversights." Then our Lord added: "If anyone shall generously deny his will in all that he knows will displease Me, directing it instead according to My good pleasure, I will communicate to him the light of knowledge from the glory of My divine Heart." What delightful New Year's gifts from the Sacred Heart!

Submission to Superiors and respect for them are sacred duties that our Lord will have observed by His beloved spouses, at all costs and in spite of all obstacles. May they never be under any delusion on this point!

Gertrude prayed one day that a Superior might correct a defect. She received this answer: "Dost thou not know that not only this person, but all who are in authority in this dear community have their defects? No one in this life can be entirely free, and I allow it so through the goodness, sweetness, and excessive tenderness which made Me choose this community, so that thereby its merits may be marvellously augmented. For there is much more virtue practised in submitting to a person whose defects are apparent than to one whose virtues seem irreproachable." On this St. Gertrude replied: "I am indeed glad, O Lord, that inferiors should gain merit, yet I would fain that Superiors should not commit faults, for I fear lest this should be caused by their imperfections." Our Lord replied: "I know truly all their defects, but I permit that in their different employments they should show them, otherwise they would not be sufficiently humble. The merits of inferiors increase as much by the defects as by the virtues of Superiors; and in the same way the merits of Superiors do not decrease through the defects or the progress of their inferiors; in one body the different members thus contribute to the general good."

Gertrude understood from these words the extreme

goodness and wisdom of God, who contributes so carefully to the salvation of the elect, permitting defects which would advance their perfection, so that if God's goodness had never been shown to her except in this instance she considered all creatures could not sufficiently bless and thank Him.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SACRED HEART AND THOSE WHO SUFFER

THE cross is the seal with which Jesus marks His elect, especially those He associates with Himself in the work of the redemption. He had called St. Gertrude to be a channel through which graces were to flow from Him to souls. As we have seen, she was also the victim offered to receive the strokes of His Justice. For this twofold office she must now be sealed with the cross. The friends of the Sacred Heart must also receive the holy but painful mark. May they learn from the holy Benedictine how to sanctify their trials.

Gertrude in a short prayer to our Lord had offered all that she had to bear in body and in soul; and at the same time she offered the joy of which she was deprived in body and in soul. Our Lord appeared to her carrying this double offering under the appearance of rings set with diamonds, which he wore as an ornament on both hands. Delighted with this sight, she often repeated this prayer. Some time after, when she was one day reciting it, it seemed to her that our Lord touched her left eye with the ring on His left hand, which signified for her corporal sufferings. From that time she suffered pain in that eye, so that it never again was free from pain. She understood the meaning; as the ring is the sign of espousal, so corporal or spiritual suffering is the sign of a divine choice and of the espousal of a soul with God.

And this is so true that every one in sorrow may confidently say: "My Lord Jesus has betrothed me in giving me His ring." And if in the midst of adversity we can still offer to God in the spirit of thanksgiving praise and acts of gratitude, we may continue and say with joy:

"And as a spouse He has adorned me with a crown." And, in reality, gratitude amidst sorrows is the most beautiful of glorious crowns, incomparably more precious than gold or topaz.

There is no doubt that sorrow is always bitter, for it always bears with it the mark of punishment, yet love for the Sacred Heart would make one ready, according to our Lord's will, either to suffer or to rejoice.

Gertrude fell ill, the fever sometimes rising and sometimes diminishing. Once, when in a great perspiration, she wished to know if she was going to be worse or better. Our Lord appeared to her. He was as beautiful as a flower, and carried in His right hand health and in His left sickness. He offered her both hands, so that she might choose which she would. But Gertrude refused both, and, advancing between the two, with great fervour she approached His most Holy Heart, where she knew was to be found the fulness of all good, for she only desired His will, which is worthy of all our praise. Our Lord received her graciously and embraced her tenderly, making her rest on His Heart. But Gertrude, turning away her face from His and turning it towards His breast, said: "Look, Lord, I turn away my face from Thee, for I desire with my whole heart that Thou shouldst pay no attention to my will, but that in all things Thy holy will should be done."

And Jesus, satisfied with the confidence of this soul which would even ignore what should become of her, allowed to flow from His Heart, as from a full cup, two streams of water which He caused to flow into her heart, saying: "Since in turning away thy face thou didst renounce thy own will, I will pour into thee all the sweetness and joy of My divine Heart." To which St. Gertrude answered: "Thou hast so often and in so many ways given me Thy divine Heart that I would know, O sweet Lover, what fruit I shall derive from the

gift Thou givest me now." Our Lord's delightful answer was: "Does not the Catholic Faith teach thee that he who communicates, receives Me for his salvation with all the gifts which are possessed by My divinity and humanity. Therefore, the more frequently he communicates, the greater and higher will be his eternal beatitude."

Let us therefore, like Gertrude, be ready to receive all from our Lord's hands; then He will find pleasure in our services as He did in those of His holy spouse.

During her seventh illness she was trying one night to think of our Lord, when He leaned over her and said: "Tell Me, My love, that thou dost languish with love of Me." Gertrude replied: "How dare I, unworthy as I am, have the presumption to tell that I languish with love of Thee?" "Whoever," said our Lord, "of himself offers his will to suffer any pain for Me may glorify himself, and in so doing he may say to Me that he languishes with love for Me, in as much as he bears his pain with patience and keeps his attention fixed on Me."

"What advantage," then said St. Gertrude, "canst Thou, my Beloved, draw from this teaching?" Our Lord replied: "This teaching gives joy to My divinity, honour to My humanity, pleasure to My eyes, and praise to My ears. Whoever learns this lesson shall receive great consolation."

She then said to our Lord: "Wilt Thou, O Lord, after this seventh illness give me back my usual health?" Our Lord replied: "If when thou wast taken ill the first time I had told thee that thou wouldst be ill seven times, perhaps thou wouldst through human weakness have been afraid and have given way to impatience. So to-day, if I told thee this seventh illness was thy last, thou wouldst hope soon to see the end, and this would diminish thy merit. Therefore My fatherly providence has arranged that thou shouldst not know either the one or the other.

In this way thou art obliged to sigh after Me with thy whole heart and to trust Me in all thy pains, both interior and exterior; and then I shall care for thee with so much fidelity and solicitude that never shall I allow thee to be afflicted beyond thy strength; I know well how weak and feeble is thy patience. To understand this, remember that after thy first illness thou didst find thyself weaker in spirit than thou dost now in thy seventh. Human reason would suppose this impossible, yet My omnipotence gives thee this strength."

How admirable is the Sacred Heart in its manner of guiding the souls it has chosen, and how good it is to suffer in its presence!

Yet there are some painful moments, when we feel ourselves powerless and too weak to pray. Gertrude complained one day: "Most loving Lord, what honour dost Thou now receive from me when I sit useless, indolent, and scarcely able to say one or two words or some psalm to Thee?" "What satisfaction wouldst thou have if the hand of a friend offered thee once or twice a drink of excellent fresh mead which thou didst think capable of strengthening thee? Well, know that I have more pleasure in the few words or psalms that thou dost offer for My praise."

On the same day she was slow, through weakness, in rising at the Gospel, and asked herself what good there was in saving herself and sparing herself this trouble when there was no hope that she would regain her former health. According to her custom, she consulted our Lord, that He might tell her which was for His greater glory. Our Lord replied: "When thou dost make a great effort, beyond thy strength, for My glory, I accept it as though I really needed it for My honour, but when thou givest to thy body what its weakness claims, directing thy intention to my good pleasure, I accept it as though I were myself ill and could not be deprived of this indulgence.

So I will reward both one and the other as the glory of my divine Magnificence demands."

So it is impossible to find the love of Jesus wanting in anything! We make an effort to please Him, and His honour is concerned! We use some indulgence, and He considers himself as the one ill. So we ought to take great care to unite ourselves to Him, and He will say to us, as He said one day to St. Gertrude: "The Love of My divine Heart draws Me to thee." We may answer with her: "I offer myself, Lord, to suffer all that could possibly contribute to Thy glory," and He will say: "My love is so completely in thee that I cannot live happy without Thee."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE SACRED HEART AND DEATH—DESIRE OF DEATH

TO desire death is one of the fruits of the love of God. When a soul is burning with the fire of divine love she wishes to see and possess her Well-Beloved. To attain to this we must pass through "the horrors of the agony and death, but love is stronger than death." So the Saints repeat the groanings of St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." This desire is also that of the friends of the Sacred Heart. When shall it be given us to go to sleep on the Lord's breast? The decree is unalterable: we must first die. Well, then, I will die and see my adored Lord, and from henceforth I shall be entirely His.

This desire was very ardent in Gertrude, which her secretary tells us was the fruit of her great confidence in our Lord; nevertheless, in conformity with the divine will, she was equally ready either to live or to die; by death she hoped for eternal blessedness, and by a longer life she hoped to give greater glory to God.

The abandonment to the will of God in the matter of her death was not Gertrude's permanent state. Her desire to possess the Sacred Heart made her often bewail the length of her exile. Our Lord had to intervene, and the intervention was efficacious.

"I thank Thee, O most loving Lord," cries out St. Gertrude, "for in Thy mercy so good and Thy goodness so merciful, Thou hast deigned to confirm my wavering and changeable soul! I was asking Thee, according to my custom, by pressing desires to be delivered from the prison of this miserable body; not to be delivered from feeling its miseries, but that Thy

goodness might not have to continue paying the debt of grace which Thy so ardent love obliged Thee to pay for the salvation of my soul. By an excess of goodness and generosity Thou hast enriched the most unworthy and ungrateful of Thy creatures.

"And indeed we did see Thee, the beauty and the crown of heavenly glory, descend from the throne of Thy Majesty and lower Thyself sweetly and without effort; and when Thou hadst thus descended, soft-flowing streams seemed also to descend, spreading themselves over the whole heavens. All the Saints prostrated with joy after having drunk of the delicious water of this torrent of delights; they raised their voices in heavenly songs of praise to our Lord for His goodness to poor sinners, and then Thou didst say unto me: 'Consider attentively how pleasing is this praise to My Majesty, and how it touches to its depths My loving Heart; restrain thyself, therefore, in future from desiring deliverance from thy body with so much importunity, when I grant to thee the gratuitous gifts of My love. For the more unworthy he is to whom I condescend, the more am I honoured and exalted by all My creatures!"

What consolation for a soul which feels acutely its own incorrigible imperfections and its constant unworthiness, from which death alone can deliver it! The Sacred Heart declares that its glory is found in showering blessings on the unworthy!

Yet the merit of a soul increases with its desires, for our Lord on another occasion gave His humble spouse this consoling assurance, that every time she experienced the desire of being free from the prison of her body and yet willingly chose to remain in this life as long as it should please God, He would add her merits to His own, and thus she would become wonderfully perfect in the sight of God.

At last our Lord took pity on her. The year preced-

ing her death, on the Feast of St. Martin, at the response *Beatus Martinus obitum suum*, St. Gertrude, inflamed with love, said to our Lord: "O Lord, when wilt Thou act so towards me?" He replied: "I will soon take thee out of this life." Some months later, on the Wednesday in Easter week, she was returning from having received Holy Communion and had still the Sacred Host in her mouth, when she was greeted with these divine words: "Come, my elect, and I will make thee My throne." And our Lord added: "For the remainder of the time thou hast to live strive no longer to live for thyself, but let all thy desires tend to My glory." Henceforth all her thoughts were filled with the thought of her deliverance.

Our Lord wished her to submit herself entirely to Him in this supreme moment. "If I should see accomplished in thee at the moment of thy departure all that thou hast premeditated from thy tenderest years up to the present moment, it would yet be little in comparison with the gifts which My gratuitous bounty has bestowed on thee without any desires on thy part." Then our Lord added: "Choose what thou wilt: to leave thy body at once, or to be more beautifully adorned by a long illness, though I know well the fear thou hast of the dust of negligences which so often stain the soul during a long illness."

"May Thy will be done, my Lord," said Gertrude. Our Lord replied: "Thou hast done well to leave Me the choice. But if through love for Me thou wilt consent to continue thy pilgrimage in thy body, I will stay with thee as a dove on its nest, and I will inflame thee with love on My Heart; then after thy death I will conduct thee to the happy land of eternal spring."

From this time the desire of death was not felt so much by the Saint for a while; and when she entered into herself she seemed to hear interiorly the words; "My dove in the clefts of the rock" (Cant. ii.).

Preparation for Departure.

Our Lord deigned to invite her to unite with Him in making the preparation for death. "When a young girl perceives the messengers of her betrothed often renewing their visits and making arrangements for the celebration of her marriage she knows it is time to make her own. In the same way, when illness comes, it is well to neglect nothing that thou seest necessary to prepare for death."

"And how," said St. Gertrude, "shall I know the much desired hour of Thy coming, when Thou shalt draw me from the prison of the flesh?" Our Lord replied: "I will send two angels, princes of the heavenly court, who shall sing sweetly in thy ears: 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him'" (Matt. xxv. 6).

We see, then, that these preparations are to be made both by the Sacred Heart and by the soul devoted to it. One of the last preparations was to inflame with love the heart of the dying.

Gertrude had heard a preacher say among other things that "Love is like a golden arrow, and whatever this arrow touches becomes in some way our own; therefore it is foolishness to give our love to earthly things and neglect those of heaven." Gertrude, inflamed with love, said to our Lord: "Why have I not this arrow with which to pierce Thee at once, Beloved of my soul, so that I may possess Thee always?"

As she said these words she saw our Lord send towards her a golden arrow, saying: "Thou wouldst wish to pierce Me if thou hadst a golden arrow; but I have one, and I am going to wound thee with a wound which shall never heal." And our Lord explained to her the triple effect that this arrow of His love would produce in the soul.

The first effect of this wound is to render the soul languid and to cause it to lose all taste for transitory things, so that it no longer finds in them either pleasure or consolation. The second effect is to stir up in the soul a burning desire for God, so that it finds it in some way impossible to breathe without Him. The third effect is to inebriate it with inexpressible joy; the soul, as though already separated from the body, seems to drink long draughts of the intoxicating torrents of the divinity.

"And why, then, Lord Jesus, dost Thou wait until our last hour before piercing us with this arrow, which has been steeped in the Blood of Thy Sacred Heart?"

The other preparations, on the part of our Lord, are illness and the anguish with which He afflicts His servants. Are they really afflictions? On the contrary, He prepares for them a triumphal entrance; He sends, as a Prince to escort His bride, a numerous company of soldiers and lords laden with presents, who are to accompany her with the sound of musical instruments.

Our Lord said to St. Gertrude: "I love thee and I am with thee, and it is I who bear in thee all the pain thou hast in thy heart and in thy body. All My Saints hasten to surround thee as thou dost advance along the royal road, and they rejoice in thy happiness. The lyres, the tambourines, the presents carried in this triumphal march, are no other things than the sufferings and pains of illness: musical instruments which resound constantly and with sweetness in My ears; they move Me to compassion for thee, they excite My divine Heart to shower blessings on thee, and to draw thee more and more to Myself.

"And when thou shalt come to that place destined for thee from all eternity, when thy strength shall be so far spent that death seems imminent, then in the presence of My Saints I will give thee the most tender kiss of peace with the betrothal ring—viz., the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. It will be a kiss, because I will pour over

thee My unction with the intimate sweetness of My divine breath. And through this anointing it will be impossible for the smallest sin of negligence to attach itself to thy soul, that might turn away, even for an instant, My tender looks.

" The more thou dost hasten the time for receiving Extreme Unction, the greater shall be thy happiness; thou shalt then be so near to Me that as soon as I am prepared to conduct thee to My eternal kingdom thou shalt be instantly warned of it, because of this close nearness, and thy heart, preparing to meet Me, shall thrill with gladness. So I will cause thee to traverse, inundating thee with My consolations and holding thee firmly in My arms, the torrent of a temporal death, and I will introduce, immerge, and absorb thee entirely in the ocean of My perfect divinity, and there, becoming one spirit with Me, thou shalt reign for ever and ever.

" Then, instead of the lyres and tambourines of thy sufferings, which thou didst touch and which gave Me joy, on the way thou shalt hear sweet melodies and experience numberless joys which are now the reward of My deified humanity for all the sorrows I endured on earth for the salvation of men."

And our Lord added this promise: " If anyone should desire the consolation of a similar visit at his last hour, he must apply himself every day to imitate the virtues of My life; he must place himself under the yoke and give Me the reins of his own will. He may then hope with confidence that My goodness will faithfully assist him everywhere as a father. He must offer Me for My eternal praise all his sorrows and adversities; then in reward for his sufferings he shall receive from Me precious stones. And if it should happen that he should retake the reins from My hands by doing in anything his own will, he must at once repair his fault by penance, and abandon again to Me his own will. My merciful hand will lead

him again and conduct him with honour and glory to the kingdom of eternal brightness."

What a delightful promise! Sufferings transformed into musical instruments with which to rejoice the Beloved as He approaches, and Extreme Unction becomes a kiss between the soul and its God, when it leaves time to enter eternity.

CHAPTER XXXIV

PREPARATION BY THE SOUL FOR DEATH

THE soul must not wait until the last illness to prepare for death. It must often do so while in health. But what becomes of these preparations, made at long distances of time between each?

St. Gertrude said one day to our Lord: "If thou, O Lord, hadst taken me out of this life when by Thy words Thou didst permit me to hope for it, I believe that by Thy grace Thou wouldst have found me better prepared than now, when my tepidity and carelessness make me fear to be found less well prepared."

Our Lord replied: "Everything has its proper time in the wise dispositions of My providence. So all that thou didst formerly do to prepare shall be faithfully kept for thee by My goodness, and nothing that thou shalt add shall be lost."

Our Lord had already made the same promise to His faithful servant when she was ill: "It is I," He said, "who at different times have excited in thy soul a desire of death and for the reception of Extreme Unction. And I keep in the depths of My divine Heart, to be used for thy eternal salvation, all the preparations in thought and act which thou didst then make use of in order to receive worthily this Sacrament. In this sense is to be understood what is written: 'But the just man if he be prevented with death shall be in rest' (Wisd. ix. 7). If by an accident thou wert surprised by a sudden death and deprived of the Sacraments, or else wert unconscious when receiving them, which happens to the souls of My elect, thou shouldst suffer no detriment. All that in past years thou hast done to prepare for death will

continue by My divine help to put forth flowers and bear fruits of salvation for thee for all eternity."

Our Lord had Himself inspired her with this desire. "As I told thee," He said, "My intention, which I disclosed when thou beganst thy book, was that thou shouldst be a light to the nations to enlighten many. It is necessary, therefore, that each one may find in thy book, according to his need, what may instruct and console him."

And it is very consoling for souls who, at the monthly retreat, habitually prepare themselves for death to know that their dispositions and preparation are kept in the Sacred Heart, there to flower and bear fruit for eternity.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE ANNUAL PREPARATION FOR DEATH: FIRST PROXIMATE PREPARATION

WHAT were Gertrude's preparations at the time of her death? They may be placed under four heads:

1. The annual preparation.
2. Reparation for negligences.
3. Repeated appeals to the Beloved of her heart.
4. The retreat of each Friday, at three o'clock, in the wound of the Sacred Heart.

She had composed a most useful instruction, teaching how a man can, at least once a year, think devoutly of his death and prepare with all care for that uncertain hour. The first day is given to thinking of the last illness, the second to Confession, the third to Extreme Unction, the fourth to Holy Communion, and the fifth to death itself.

When St. Gertrude was preparing to follow this exercise which she had taught others, our Lord said to her: "Come and rest on Me, as the prophet Elias rested on the child he raised from the dead; lay thy hands on Mine, offering to Me all the works of thy hands. Place thy eyes on Mine, and do the same for all thy members and all their actions; offer Me all the members of thy body in union with My most pure members, so that in future thine may move only for My glory, praise, and love."

She at once did as she had been commanded; and in spirit she saw a golden band which came from the Heart of Jesus and enriched her soul so as to attach it to our

Lord with a cord of indissoluble love. During the days of this exercise our Lord deigned to visit her several times.

On the day which she devoted to prepare for Extreme Unction, our Lord with an extreme tenderness appeared to her and brought forth from His Heart the oil which by its touch was to purify her ears, mouth, and other members. To adorn them He added to it the merits of the holy members of His deified humanity. Then our Lord said to her: "Entrust Me with these ornaments" (so Jesus designated the preparations for death) "and with the care of the most faithful mother I will place them where thou canst never tarnish them by sin or negligence." She devoutly did as He asked, and our Lord seemed to receive from her these ornaments and place them in His Heart, which was a most safe place of concealment.

On the day that she meditated on the Holy Viaticum two angels came to conduct her before our Lord. He tenderly received her and caused her to rest on His Heart; then He granted her the most complete and intimate union with Himself in the life-giving Sacrament of the Altar. This union with her was made under the veil of the Sacrament, which He spread with His own hands.

Then on the day on which she considered how she should breathe forth her last sigh, and while she said the prayer assigned for this exercise with all possible devotion, our Lord appeared again to her with the same goodness. With His most holy hand He blessed her members which she offered Him, as being dead to this world and unable to live longer except for Jesus, for His eternal praise and to sing His love. He impressed on her by this blessing a golden cross with so much power that through this member, so blessed, the cross was to be seen shining. At the elevation of the Host she offered God her heart,

henceforth dead to the world, and prayed Him by His holy humanity to render her soul pure and immaculate, and to ornament and enrich it with the virtues of His most perfect divinity. She implored Him by the love which had united His supreme divinity to His Immaculate humanity, to prepare her to receive His graces. Our Lord then appeared, opening with His two hands His deified Heart; then He united it with great love to her heart, which she held open.

In this way the flame of divine Love, escaping from the ardent furnace of the divine Heart, enkindled and melted in some way her blessed soul and caused her to reflow into God. So in the midst of their hearts, so united, sprang up a tree of marvellous beauty. It had a double trunk, one of gold and the other of silver. These two trunks were entwined and raised to a great height. Its leaves shone as though they were beautified by the bright rays of the Holy Trinity, innumerable in their splendour. All the heavenly inhabitants received from it untold happiness. Our Lord explained this vision to her. "This tree," He said, "is sprung from the union of My divine will and thine. The golden trunk represents the divinity, and the silver one the soul which entwines itself around the tree."

This vision reminds us of the words of our Lord: "I am the vine, you are the branches; without Me you can do nothing, but with Me you can bear much fruit." So, Gertrude beginning at once to pray for the persons who had been recommended to her, this tree seemed to produce fruit coloured with the fire of divine love. These fruits were lowered within the reach of those for whom she prayed; they were thus able by their desires and devotion to gather them for their eternal salvation.

After this, as she was very weak, she lay on her couch to rest, saying: "Lord, I offer, for Thy eternal praise, all the comforts I shall henceforth take, and I beg of Thee

to accept them as though they were granted to the members of Thy holy humanity."

"May all the faults that through human frailty thou mayest in future commit be expiated by virtue of My divinity."

CHAPTER XXXVI

SECOND PREPARATION: REPARATION FOR HER NEGLIGENCES

REPARATION may proceed from two causes: our own personal interest, which moves us to desire to escape punishment or to obtain a diminution of it; or from love of God, to whom we would wish to offer an honourable reparation to compensate, as far as we can, for our perpetual unfaithfulness.

This last motive induced Gertrude, devout lover of the Sacred Heart, to make a universal reparation for all her faults some time before her death. This reparation was preceded by an ineffable favour granted her by the Sacred Heart.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose beauty surpasses in an inestimable manner that of all the children of men, appeared to her. He received her tenderly into His arms and offered her a place of rest on His left side, near to His Heart, so full of sweetness and bliss. He reminded her of the cruel agony His holy Body had endured on the cross for the salvation of the world, inviting her to appropriate to herself the fruit thereof for her eternal salvation; He also reminded her of the sorrow His loving Heart had endured on the cross in foreseeing that for so many this passion and death, so bitter, ignominious, and holy, would be fruitless. He told her of the terrible desolation He endured when He, the most faithful Friend, saw Himself abandoned by all His friends, brutally arrested as a thief and a robber, bound unmercifully, dragged to death, and, moreover, insulted, mocked, and outraged, by His enemies. He then applied to her the fruit of His most precious death, so that it might sanctify her as His divine goodness desired.

Whilst she thus rested on the loving Heart of her God and was firmly held by His left arm, she looked around. Her eyes showed her this deified Heart spread before her as a garden or a paradise, and the eyes of her soul contemplated in it all its supernatural charms and beauties. Every breath of the holy humanity of our Lord seemed to form some verdant meadow, and the thoughts of that sweet Heart were manifested under the appearance of roses, lilies, violets, and other charming flowers. The virtues of our Lord were like a fruitful vine, the vine of Engaddi, whose grapes are so sweet; all the trees, representing either His divine virtues or His loving Words, spread around their branches and formed under themselves resting-places full of beauty and refreshment. Our Lord seemed to give to the soul the fruits of these divine trees, His virtues, and to cause it to drink of the wine made by the grapes. Through the divine Heart three streams of most pure water seemed to flow, and these mingled together in a marvellous manner.

Our Lord said to St. Gertrude: "At the hour of thy death thou shalt so efficaciously drink of these streams and thy soul will draw from them so much health and perfection that it will no longer be able to remain in the flesh. For the present content thyself with contemplating them; thy merit, in this way, shall be increased unto life everlasting."

While Gertrude, in the midst of such happiness, thus rested, she was no longer a poor invalid on her bed of suffering, but a soul all athirst for God and admitted into the most tender communications with Him. And there, under the propitious inspiration of the divinity, she meditated, not in the bitterness of her heart, but in joy, on the riches of her Lord; on the sterility of her own past efforts, and the grace that was offered her with which to repair all her negligences.

She then recalled short and devout prayers, and com-

posed others still more fervent. Then, taking all the powers of her soul, she offered them one by one to pay the debts she had contracted by her negligence in reciting the Breviary, the Offices of the Blessed Virgin and of the Dead.

She wished, too, to repair what she had lacked in the practice of virtues such as the love of God and her neighbour, humility, obedience, charity, cordiality, gratitude, and sympathy with the joys and pains of others. She wished also to atone for negligence in her spiritual exercises, such as in the praise of God, thanksgiving, her own amendment, the prayers she ought to have said for herself or for the Church. All this she wished to atone for by these little prayers. She was not content with reciting the prayers once for each intention, but in order to cancel the debt contracted by her corporal powers she united two hundred and twenty-five of these short prayers, adding to their value by reciting with each a *Pater* and an *Ave*.

These prayers were of such exquisite sweetness that they were capable not only of moving men to devotion, but also of pleasing God, the Supreme King and Spouse of eternal bliss.

She wished also to pay her debt of gratitude for all the promises made to her by infallible Truth. Her unshaken confidence gave her all the necessary assurance of their fulfilment, but she never forgot her unworthiness and applied herself with all her strength by her fervent prayers to make herself more worthy and fit to receive the favours she firmly hoped for from the great liberality and goodness of God.

She then read her rule with great attention. She weighed and considered each prescription with pious supplications and deep sighs. She wished, in doing this, to restore to its first beauty what she might have done amiss, and also what had been done through the help of divine grace alone.

Nor did she forget the Virgin Mother, and prayed the Son of God to offer her humble excuses to His Blessed Mother for all the carelessness she had been guilty of in her service. Then the King of Glory arose and offered His divine Heart to His holy Mother, saying: "Behold, loving Mother, my Heart overflowing with bliss. Receive with it My divine love, which from all eternity and in preference to any other creature predestined you, created, sanctified, and prepared you especially to be My Mother. Receive the offering of all the tenderness I bestowed on you while on earth, when in My infancy you held Me to your breast and nourished Me. Receive the constant filial affection I always showed you during My life, being submissive to you as a Son to his Mother—I, the Lord of heaven; above all, the affection I felt for you at the hour of death, when I forgot My own sufferings to compassionate your sorrow and desolation, giving you another son in My place to care for you. Receive also the ineffable love with which I raised you on the day of your Assumption above all the choir of Angels and Saints, enthroning you Queen of heaven and earth. I renew and double all these favours for the love of My well-beloved spouse, in reparation for the negligences she may have committed in your service, O tender Mother. With your happiness thus increased, go and meet My spouse at the hour of her death and receive her with maternal tenderness."

The Mother of divine grace accepted this offering with great joy, and declared herself ready for all that was asked of her. Then she said: "My beloved Son, I will ask of Thee one more favour. Grant that when, fulfilling Thy desire, I go to meet Thy chosen one, all those graces Thou hast showered upon Me may pour on her a divine sweetness more delicious than balsam, and fill her with joy."

And Gertrude, moved by so great a condescension of

the divine goodness, said to our Lord: "O God of Goodness, I am unhappy to have forgotten to ask, with a similar fervour, a great favour. Bless the reparation, weak as it is, that I offered to Thee for my negligences in saying the Breviary, and in the performance of my service due to Thee, since Thy infinite goodness has deigned to raise so high these feeble efforts of my love."

Our Lord replied: "Fear not, My well-beloved; I have accepted all in union with the love which caused Me to grant thee the grace, when from all eternity these works were ennobled and prepared in My divine Heart. I have added to this all the devotion and fervour ever experienced by a human heart under the influence of My grace; and thus for thy carelessness I offered it all perfectly sanctified to God My Father, as a holocaust and reparation of an agreeable odour. Also He, fully satisfied, has inclined Himself towards thee with all the love of a heavenly Father.

Third Preparation: 3. *The Repeated Calls of the Beloved.*

Gertrude, therefore, having by the grace of God carefully completed these exercises, allowed all the powers of her body and soul to rise to higher things; and in this devout recollection she often repeated verses which best expressed the ardour of her desires for God, and most intimately united to herself Him for whose love she thirsted.

To accomplish this she raised her intention as high as possible, uniting herself to the love and gratitude which the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity show to each other, and making herself in this the mouthpiece of the whole creation. The Benedictine, whose vocation is the praise of God, shows herself true to that duty even in death. She rested at that time, with an assured confidence, in the words of this hymn, which remained always in her thoughts:

Desiderate millies,
Mi Jesu, quando venies?
Me lætum quando facies?
De te quando me saties?

Veni, veni, Rex optime,
Pater immensæ gloriæ;
Effulge clare lætius
Jam exspectamus sæpius.

Tua te cogat pietas
Ut mala nostra superes,
Parcendo, et voti compotes
Nos tuo vultu saties.

WHEN WILL HE COME?

Amongst a thousand still desired,
When wilt Thou come, O Jesu mine?
When wilt Thou fill my soul with Thee?
Which knows no joys on earth but Thine?

O come, O come, most Mighty King!
Father of boundless power and praise,
Thy joy is light, Thy light is joy,
O hasten, Lord, life's passing days.

Thou thinkest thoughts of tenderest love,
Sparing our sins, and giving place
To mercy. Sweetest, dearest Lord!
O come, I long to see Thy face!

She interspersed in these verses other similar words, as: *Veni festinans propere* (Hasten to come!), *Sitivit anima mea* (My soul thirsts!), and another prayer of thanksgiving with which she had been divinely inspired.

This exercise she repeated over and over again during her illness, without ever tiring, notwithstanding her extreme weakness. Every day she made reparation for the faults committed by her senses, unless she was raised by a great grace to more sublime acts.

Fourth Preparation: The Retreat on Friday at Three o'Clock.

At this time she commenced the practice of retiring about the hour of None as though to rest, so that no one should disturb her. She then occupied herself with intense fervour in thinking of God. She did for herself, as though she was in her agony, all that was usually done at that time and abandoned herself utterly to holy prayer and salutary meditation. She had already been observing this practice for some time with extreme devotion, when, on a Friday, being recollected in a sweet spiritual repose, she received another favour from the Sacred Heart.

Our Good Lord showed her beforehand in a kind of ecstacy the happy conditions in which she would leave this world, by the following vision. She thought she was resting on the breast of our Lord, supported by His left arm. Then a great multitude of Angels and Saints pressed around, full of joy, each carrying a thurible which contained the prayers, supplications, and devotions of the entire Church. They offered them as incense in honour of the divine King, the glorious Bridegroom, and on behalf of Gertrude, His well-beloved bride. She invoked Mary, and the Queen of Virgins bowed, and with her holy hands supported Gertrude's head with great tenderness. Her good Angel St. Michael, all the Saints, and in particular St. John the Evangelist, came to offer her their services and to give her their merits in proportion as she asked for their help, which is usually done for those in their agony.

Then the Son of God, the King of Glory, bent over her with great tenderness to embrace His spouse, leaning still on His breast. As the sun in its noonday heat absorbs the little drops of dew, so He absorbed into Himself by His divine power this happy soul, with all the virtues and

fruits of good works which the Saints had just made over to her. Surrounding and penetrating her entirely, He united her to Himself, as iron becomes fire under the influence of heat.

St. Gertrude's Sisters have not described her death; they were satisfied with telling us of this vision. We have not the account, but we know the programme that our Lord was soon to carry out. It was fitting that the soul who had loved Him so much should die on His Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SACRED HEART AND PURGATORY

PURGATORY is the porch of heaven, but also an image of hell. They who dwell there taste beforehand of the joys of the elect; they love, they are certain of salvation; but they have to bear something of the pain of the lost, for they cannot see God; some are burning in the flames, others are rejected by divine Justice.

If in heaven there are many mansions, so are there in purgatory. Gertrude was allowed to see several of these dwellings—those which are nearest to hell and those which are nearest to heaven. The pains by which these souls were purified were regulated by their debts and blemishes. But what Gertrude noticed in these souls was that, notwithstanding their desire to possess God, they were more anxious to make themselves worthy of possessing Him.

A young novice in the monastery slept sweetly in our Lord on the Feast of the Assumption. Gertrude began to pray for her, and at once she saw her soul surrounded by light and adorned with jewels, before our Lord's throne. But the soul was before Him as a betrothed, ashamed to look at Him, trying to cover her face, not daring to raise or even open her eyes to see the glory of so great a Majesty. At this sight, Gertrude, urged by her zeal and love for this child, said to our Lord: "God of Goodness, why dost Thou allow Thy little child to stand in Thy presence as though she were a stranger, and why dost Thou not receive her to Thy embrace?" These words seemed to soften our Lord, and he held out His arms towards this soul as if He would draw her to Himself, but she, bending herself humbly before Him, seemed anxious to avoid His embrace.

Gertrude was extremely astonished and said to this soul: "Why dost thou avoid the embrace of so loving a Spouse?" "I am prevented," she said, "by some stains from which I am not yet purified; even if I could freely draw near to God, justice would oblige me to refuse to do so, so long as I see myself unworthy of so glorious a Lord." "And how comes this to pass," asked Gertrude, "since you seem to be admitted into the presence of our Lord as though you were already in heaven?" "Though all creatures are in the presence of God," she replied, "a soul can never stand before Him which is not perfect in charity. But no soul can obtain the blessedness which makes it enjoy the vision of the divinity, and so completes its reward, until it has been perfectly purified from the smallest stain, and then it deserves to enter into the joy of the Lord."

This young novice's sister died a month later. Gertrude also saw her soul. Our Lord was at her side. He poured from His five wounds joy and sweetness into this soul, and by His tender condescension consoled her, but He did not admit her at once into His eternal happiness. He said to St. Gertrude: "My Heart is in this point entirely in agreement with My justice; when this soul is purified the glory of My divinity will soon console her."

Our Lord, therefore, does not admit these souls to union with His Sacred Heart, which is the source of all blessedness, until they are purified from all their stains. But He watches over them and in some way feels their sufferings, and is ready to help and deliver as soon as the suffrages from the living are offered for these unfortunate souls.

At the time when the usual commemoration for all the relations of the religious was made our Lord appeared to St. Gertrude as St. John describes Him in the Apocalypse. She saw Him under the appearance of

a Lamb as white as snow, streams of blood flowing from His Heart, and she heard these words: "I will be propitious to all who to-day prepare a banquet in this place."

Gertrude asked how it was that He so easily delivered these souls for a few prayers which barely cost a little weariness or fatigue. He replied: "The extreme love I feel for their redemption urges Me. Suppose that a king is by his justice obliged to keep some of his greatest friends in prison, though he is longing to set them free. Full of this desire, and yet seeing that of themselves they can do nothing, this king would accept with joy from any of his courtiers what was necessary to pay their debt and give them their liberty. In the same way I receive all that is offered Me for the deliverance of the souls in purgatory which I have redeemed by the shedding of My precious blood and by My death. I thus have an opportunity to deliver them from their sufferings and to conduct them to the joys prepared for them from all eternity."

Gertrude continued: "Then the pain that is borne for these souls is pleasing to Thee?" "It is as pleasing to Me," He replied, "as if their money had redeemed Me from captivity, and this each time a soul is delivered by their means. And I will certainly repay them in due time according to the measure of My almighty power and goodness." "And how many souls," asked St. Gertrude, "will Thy clemency grant to the prayers of each?" "As many as the charity of each shall deserve." Then He added: "My love, urged by My natural goodness, wishes to deliver an immense number of souls through the suffrages of each, so much am I influenced by the prayers of a loving soul!"

What a consoling revelation! The Sacred Heart of Jesus as grateful to those who deliver a soul from purgatory as He would be if He were Himself delivered from

captivity! The Sacred Heart assigning the measure of our love as the measure of our power to deliver the souls of the dead! Oh, let us then love Him always more and more, and try, like St. Gertrude, to empty purgatory.

The Efficacy of Our Suffrages.

Encouraged by these instructions, Gertrude loved to pray for the dead. Several times our Lord showed her how efficacious these prayers were.

She heard of the death of a lay-brother who had served the monastery many years. Confined to bed by illness, she turned at once to our Lord and prayed for his soul. She then saw his soul black and soiled and suffering miserably from remorse of conscience. Sincerely compassionating his sufferings, Gertrude said five *Paters* in honour of our Lord's five wounds. She devoutly kissed the wound in our Lord's side, and it seemed to her that there flowed from it blood and water, accompanied by vapour. She understood that the soul for which she prayed had by virtue of the blood and water and vapour been wonderfully relieved.

But it was, above all, by Holy Communion that Gertrude helped these poor souls. One day, after receiving our Lord she offered the Sacred Host on behalf of the Holy Souls, and she knew that they obtained great relief! Filled with admiration, she then said to our Lord: "My most loving Lord, why dost Thou not always work in me the marvel I now experience?" Our Lord replied: "A king in his palace does not allow all to approach him, but when his love for the queen causes him to leave his palace and go into the city, all the inhabitants through her receive more easily and with greater liberality his royal magnificence, and accept his gifts with joy. In the same way when, yielding to My goodness and the sweetness of My Heart, I lower Myself in this Sacrament of life to some faithful soul exempt from mortal sin, all in

heaven, on the earth, and in purgatory receive inexpressible gifts."

Another day, when preparing for Holy Communion, Gertrude felt an intense desire to bury herself in the depths of her own nothingness. She called to mind the profound humiliations of the Son of God when He descended into limbo to free its captives. In order to imitate this humiliation, she seemed to go down to the depths of purgatory, and there, abasing herself as much as she could, she understood that our Lord said to her: "When thou dost receive Holy Communion, I will draw to Myself all those that thou shalt draw to thyself by thy desires."

Another time, on the night of our Lord's glorious Resurrection, as she was praying fervently before Matins our Lord appeared to her full of glory and divine majesty and in the beauty of His eternal immortality. Prostrating herself at His feet, she humbly adored Him, saying: "Thou hast deigned, most glorious Spouse, brightness and beauty of the Angels, to choose me, the last of Thy creatures, for Thy spouse; I have no desire or thirst but for Thy glory and honour. I look upon Thy friends as mine; I beg of Thee, then, most loving Lord, in honour of Thy adorable Resurrection, to absolve from their sins the souls of all who are Thy particular friends. And in order to obtain more quickly this grace, I offer in union with Thy Sacred Passion all that I suffer in my mind and body from my continual infirmities." Then our Lord in His marvellous goodness allowed her to see the multitude of souls which were being delivered from their sufferings, and He said to her: "I give them all as a dowry to thy love, and it will be known eternally in heaven that they were delivered by thy prayers, and the Saints will ascribe it to thy eternal honour." St. Gertrude asked: "What is their number?" Our Lord replied: "None but I know that."

As she understood that, though these souls were freed from their sufferings, they were not admitted to eternal happiness, she offered herself body and soul to the divine goodness to suffer all that was wanting so that the beatitude of these souls might be complete. Then our Lord, appeased by her offering, admitted them at once to the joy of heaven. A few minutes later Gertrude felt a pain in her side; she knelt down before a crucifix and our Lord accepted her pain and sorrow to increase still more the happiness of these souls, saying to them: "I offer to you the gift which My spouse has just now given Me with so much love, in order to place the crowning point on your happiness. On your side return her honour for honour and the help of your prayers."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE GRATITUDE OF THE HOLY SOULS

WE see that the holy souls are enjoined to pray for us by Him who has delivered them. Gratitude, which is the sign of a generous heart on earth, must be much more in heaven, where the heart is transformed by divine love. So the souls who enter heaven without having to pass through the expiatory flames give to us the suffrages which are offered for them.

One day when they were conducting the burial service of an Abbess of the convent, at the Offertory St. Gertrude offered to God for the soul of the deceased and to expiate her faults the most holy Heart of our Lord. She offered it, in union with His humanity, filled with all holiness and perfection overflowing into the hearts of men. Then she saw that our Lord accepted this offering; and calling to Him the soul of the Abbess, He said to her: "Come, little virgin, come to Me and receive the gifts sent to thee by thy daughters."

Then the Abbess placed herself before her Well-Beloved and put her hand into His breast considering carefully what was therein enclosed. As she found in the Heart of Jesus the perfection of all virtues and all gifts, she said with the tenderness she naturally possessed from our Lord, as she drew gifts from this Treasure-house: "My loving Lord, this would be suitable for our Prioress, and this for So-and-so, and this for this other." She enumerated what she had known on earth as the needs of each, and now she was anxious to enrich them from the abundance of the virtues of the divine Heart.

The Heart of Jesus is most anxious to distribute to us its gifts. Our Lord made this clear to this soul just entered into heaven, for, looking lovingly at her, He said:

"Come nearer to Me, My chosen one." She arose at once, and placed herself at our Lord's left side. He placed His arm around her, and pressing her to His heart said: "Judge now, as I judge Myself." By this He gave her to understand that in the distribution of the gifts she had given to her friends, according to the needs she had known on the earth, she had simply followed a human judgment, but in so embracing her, our Lord had so united her with Himself that now she could only see as God sees; for He, loving man with an affection above all others, still leaves him providentially some defects.

At the elevation of the Host, Gertrude offered with It for her well-beloved deceased mother the filial love of the Heart of Jesus for His Virgin Mother. And then the Son of God said tenderly to this soul: "Come nearer, little virgin; I will show thee the filial love of My Sacred Heart." Then the Blessed Virgin Mary, taking this soul into her arms, led it to our Lord, who leaned towards it and gave it with a most tender embrace an idea of what His love for His Mother was.

Gertrude tried to think of some richer offering that would increase the merits of a mother so much loved. She therefore offered the filial affection which Jesus Christ had for God His Father, as God, and for Mary His mother, as man. Then the Son of God, rising from His throne, approached the soul of the Abbess, saying: "Come, O queen, and see something more precious still, which they have sent thee!" And as she ascended still higher and higher under Mary's care, Gertrude cried out: "I can no longer see thee, my lady and mother, nor understand anything of the reward thou receivest." "Gertrude, my daughter," the Abbess replied, "I have received a special reward from God, because I guided thee with love and fidelity for the greater glory of God in the business thou knowest of. The Heart of my well-beloved Lord as a sweet-sounding harp sings to me a sacred song

of love, and the celestial choir praises me. The sound of His voice has the power to make a sweet light to shine before my eyes and a delicious scent to embalm my senses, except my sense of touch, because of some slight negligence that I had in this point, though my intention was good and for the sake of peace."

How this privation in the future possession of the Heart of Jesus should excite us to mortify our fallen nature and urge us on to zealous works for the glory of the Sacred Heart, for want of zeal is punished as severely as real failings!

A young religious, whose virtues had been really heroic, passed from her bed of agony into the Heart of Jesus. On the day of her burial Gertrude saw her in so great joy and glory that it would have been difficult for human weakness to understand it. Gertrude was allowed to taste something of the happiness of her reward, and one day this blessed soul said to her: "Wilt thou know something of my reward? The celestial ark in which dwells substantially all the fulness of the divinity, the Heart of my divine Lover Jesus Christ, is fully open to me, except one small corner which during my life I did not deserve to have opened to me. What is hidden in this secret corner is only shown to those who on the earth loved God with so much love that they rejoiced to make known to all the benefits they received, so that God might be more and more glorified. I had not this love; I was content to know alone the gifts I received, therefore I cannot penetrate into this treasure, reserved for those who loved our Lord more."

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SACRED HEART IS THE REWARD OF THE SAINTS

OUR Lord said in the Gospel that there was more joy in heaven over the conversion of one sinner than over the perseverance of ninety-nine just. By this He wished to manifest the goodness of His Sacred Heart towards sinners and the great joy He feels when we leave sin to return to Him. But who will describe to us the delight of His divine Heart when some privileged soul leaves the earth and enters heaven? "Then," says St. Gertrude, "the Heart of Jesus pours itself over the whole earth and His graces fall like sweet dew, so that no just request rises to heaven without being granted."

The Saints find their eternal blessedness in the divine Heart. We already knew this from St. Mechtilde. Her well-beloved friend in her turn tells us that the elect find their eternal rest in this divine Heart. On the Feast of St. Augustine she saw in vision the merits of several Saints: she also wished to know something of St. Agnes, the dear little Saint she had loved from her infancy. Our Lord at once granted her request. He lifted His arm and showed her under a gentle and sweet exterior the happy Agnes resting on His divine Heart. This vision indicated the exquisite purity of Agnes, and confirmed the words of Holy Scripture: "Incorruption bringeth near to God" (Wisd. vi. 20). Gertrude saw this noble child so near to God that in Heaven no elect could be found equal to her in sweetness and purity.

She also understood that our Lord draws always to Himself all the devotedness and love with which a human heart is or can be filled. He excites it to devotion and

to the love of God, drawing it, as with honey, by the words of this holy virgin, of which the Church makes frequent use in her office. All this, she saw, was greatly enriched in His Heart, and then flowed as most sweet nectar into Agnes's heart, who in the vision was so closely pressed to the divine Heart. The words of St. Agnes preserved by the Church are not numerous, and yet they have merited for her ineffable marks of tenderness from the Heart of Jesus.

What, then, shall be the reward of doctors burning with divine love who have poured out holy words of doctrine and truth? On the eve of St. Bernard's Feast Gertrude meditated during Mass on the merits of this holy Father. She felt a particular devotion to him on account of his sweet and persuasive eloquence. The holy Abbot appeared to her in great glory, shining with celestial beauty. His breast, heart, and hands seemed covered with golden plates, encrusted with precious stones from which shone brilliant rays of light. These golden plates represented the beauty of his salutary doctrine; after being long meditated in his holy heart it arose to his blessed mouth, leaving it to be spread over the world. His pure hands wrote out faithfully this doctrine for the salvation of all who would profit by it. The precious stones represented still more specially the words which mostly breathe forth the love of God. They seemed to send forth bright rays right into the centre of the divine Heart, and gave to God quite a special delight. After having drawn from all hearts in heaven and on earth all the progress and devotion that each had gained from the words and writings of this Saint, our Lord gathered them all into His Heart. Thence He poured all these merits and brilliant rays into St. Bernard's soul. This delightful pouring out seemed to draw from St. Bernard's heart, as from a lute, marvellously sweet sounds; they represented the virtues of the Saint, particularly his innocence and love.

Gertrude did not forget the illustrious Bishop St. Augustine. From her childhood she had always felt a deep affection for him, and she gave God many thanks for all the benefits she had received through his intercession. This glorious pontiff appeared to her at St. Bernard's side in equal glory; he was not inferior in the perfection of a very holy life or in the salutary doctrine which he had spread so sweetly abroad. The great Bishop, worthy of God, stood before the throne of the divine Majesty in the ineffable beauty of heavenly glory. He, like St. Bernard, drew from the depths of his heart burning rays of fire which he directed to the centre of the divine Heart, emblems of the ardent eloquence which had inflamed the hearts of men with the love of God.

Our Lord thus attracted to His divine Heart all the fruits of faith, consolation, learning, illumination, and love wrought in the hearts of the inhabitants of heaven and earth by the words of St. Augustine. Then He caused them to flow back into the heart of the Saint, beautified and enriched by contact with His Sacred Heart. This outpouring of grace entirely filled the heart of this holy doctor, and caused it to produce most harmonious sounds, very pleasing to God. Gertrude noticed a difference: that which made the sounds from St. Bernard's heart most sweet was his virginal purity and his tender love for God; in St. Augustine's case the sweetest sounds proceeded from his loving repentance and the fervour of his burning love for God. It would, however, have been difficult to say which sounds gave the greater delight to those who heard them. Then St. Bernard said to St. Gertrude: "These are the modulations that are spoken of in Holy Scripture where it says: 'This holy city is dear to God, filled with modulations and songs of praise.' The heart of each Saint resounds eternally before God with the sweet songs of his virtues."

Lord Jesus, after having made Thy Sacred Heart our

treasure here on earth, it will also be our eternal happiness in heaven. We earnestly beg that it may be our paradise. Mayest Thou say to us those words spoken to a soul devoted to Thee: "Search through heaven, and if thou dost find anything thou desirest in any Saint, take it from My divine Heart."

CHAPTER XL

THE SOUL DEVOTED TO THE SACRED HEART

IT was St. Gertrude's mission, not only to reveal the Sacred Heart to us and predict its merciful designs, but she was also to be an example of devotion, love, and expiation. St. Gertrude in the thirteenth and St. Margaret Mary in the seventeenth century are both predestined models for the friends of the Sacred Heart to imitate. Both are loving victims, with this difference, that St. Francis de Sales' daughter seemed to have more of the sorrowful joys of the innocent Victim, while St. Benedict's daughter tasted more the inebriating joys of the well-beloved Spouse.

The love of the Sacred Heart absorbed St. Gertrude entirely, and kept her always submissive to the will of our Saviour.

We are told by one of the religious that " one day Dame Mechtilde, our Chanter, saw our Lord seated on a high throne. Gertrude seemed to walk before this throne, and she often looked at our Lord's face and eagerly absorbed all the graces that flowed from His divine Heart. As Dame Mechtilde was admiring the scene, she heard these words: ' The life led by My chosen one is so perfect that every moment is spent in My presence; as thou seest, she only seeks to know My good pleasure. As soon as she has ascertained My will on any point she at once strives with all her strength to carry it out; she then returns to learn My will further, so that she may again satisfy My desires, so all her life is consecrated to My honour and glory.' "

St. Gertrude's eyes were constantly raised to the Sacred Heart in order to ascertain its least desires. In the same way she performed all her actions in conformity with its

holy intentions. If she sang the praises of God the Sacred Heart was like an organ accompanying her voice; at Holy Mass she considered it as an altar on which the faithful placed their offerings and where divine love consumed them in honour of the Most High. In Holy Communion it was from the Sacred Heart that came the flames of love that enkindled souls. If confession was painful to Gertrude, the Sacred Heart allowed some drops from its open wound to fall and warm the bath into which the penitent soul must plunge. When sorrow visited her she sweetly leaned her head on the Sacred Heart, and found in her own pain some solace to offer to that compassionate Heart. In a word, all the works, all the words, and the whole life of St. Gertrude, were consecrated to the Heart of Jesus, wherein she found all her happiness.

"I find nothing on the earth in which I can take pleasure excepting only Thyself, my sweet Lord." And our Lord responded in the same way: "And I find no joy either in heaven or on earth without thee. Therefore I associate thee with all My joys, and I enjoy none unless thou dost share them; the more joy there is for Me, the more fruit for thee."

St. Bernard had already said that "Though the honour of the King loved justice, the love of the spouse sought primarily a return of affection and fidelity." St. Gertrude wished to grow daily in the love of the divine Heart, so as to have no other life than that of her Lord.

She says in her *Exercise on the Renewal of Love*: "Place thyself on His Heart, steeped in love, and beg of Him the celestial kiss which is so powerful. May He make thee die to thyself, and by this happy death make thee enter into life and become one with Him. In the thirst which consumes thee say with the Psalmist: "As the heart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God? My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God: when shall I come and appear before

the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?'

"O Love, whose kisses are so sweet, Thou art the fountain that my thirsty soul seeks. It is to Thee that my heart cries. O boundless sea, why wilt Thou not receive this tiny drop into Thy plenitude? All my heart's desire, strong and tender, is to leave myself and enter into Thee. Oh, open to me Thy loving Heart, as a haven of salvation! As to my heart, I possess it no longer. Thou, my only treasure, hast taken it and art its guide. Thou hast transformed it, and it lives only for Thee, in Thy divine essence, weak as it is. In its ardour my soul, dissolved in Thee, lives only for Thee."

CHAPTER XLI

THE SIGNS OF LOVE GIVEN TO THE SACRED HEART

THE human heart is like a fire beneath a furnace. A perpetual fuel is necessary to keep it burning, a constant draught must always fan it. Gertrude understood this law of love. For this reason she had constant recourse to the Sacred Heart, this divine fire of charity, in order to draw from it new fervour, and on her side she made continual efforts to love more. This daily endeavour was composed of three parts—assurances of tenderness, meditation on the words and sorrows of her Well-Beloved, and self-sacrifice. Let us examine these three points in this and the following chapters.

Our Lord wishes us to show Him our love. Did he not allow the beloved disciple to repose on His breast? Did He not draw from Peter both his tears and protestations of humbled but sincere love, notwithstanding the remembrance of his triple denial? Both in fervour and in depression Gertrude knew how to satisfy this desire of the Sacred Heart.

Once in a moment of fervour she said to our Lord: "How I wish, my Lord, that I was so on fire that my soul might melt and become liquid as water, so that I might the more easily pour it out for Thee!" Our Lord replied: "Thy will shall be the fire by which this shall be accomplished." So a good will stands, before God, as desires fulfilled. It is the same as saying: "In order to love Thee, O Heart of Jesus, and to love Thee with a great love, it is enough to will it. I will it."

But inconstancy is natural to man. Gertrude, remembering several times when this inconstancy had caused her to seek herself, turned to our Lord, saying:

"To love Thee, my Beloved, is my only happiness." Then our Saviour, who understands our fallen nature and compassionates all our weaknesses, leaned over her and embraced her and said: "And I also, my well-beloved, shall always find My happiness in loving thee." Gertrude, deeply moved, in her affectionate ardour cried out: "Vile creature though I am, I salute Thee, O loving Lord!" And from the loving goodness of our Lord she received this reply: "And I, too, salute thee in return, my beloved!"

From this she understood that every time a soul says to our Lord, "My Well-Beloved, my sweetest Lord," or similar words, with great devotion, the same reply is given and a special reward in heaven is earned. So St. John the Evangelist has on earth the particular privilege of being called the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Knowing our Lord's pleasure in names of endearment, St. Gertrude on the Feast of the Circumcision offered Him short salutations on the sweet name of Jesus, composed in His praise. She was enabled to understand the ineffable feelings aroused in the divine Heart when reminded of its sweetness, goodness, and other qualities which are mentioned in these salutations, such as "I salute Thee, Jesus most loving, most clement, most desirable," etc. She wished to find other qualifications which might be applied to the Holy Name, so great that the divine Heart might be touched by them more intimately and delightfully than by any she had before used. She pondered on the choice she would make, and she felt her strength failing her. Our Lord was drawn or rather vanquished by her love, and sweetly leaned over her and impressed on her lips a loving kiss, saying: "Behold I have impressed My name on thy mouth, and I will that thou carry it to all. Every time, therefore, that thou shalt move thy lips to pronounce it, thou shalt make the most pleasant music sound in My ears."

Our Lord also welcomes the worship of our love, when we press our lips on the wound of His Sacred Heart with faith and love.

Gertrude was one day praying with the community. Our Lord approached her and lifted His left arm, offering her the wound in His sacred side to kiss. As she kissed it often, our Lord showed that He accepted these tokens of her affection with great pleasure. She then said to our Lord: "My loving Lord, as I see that this devotion is pleasing to Thee, I beg of Thee to teach me some short prayer, that Thou wilt receive with the same goodness when anyone recites it devoutly." Then an interior inspiration revealed to her that the following words might be devoutly recited: "Jesus, Saviour of the world, hear us. Thou to whom nothing is impossible, except not to have pity for those in misery; Thou who by Thy cross didst redeem the world, O Christ, hear us! I adore Thee Jesus, most loving Spouse, in the glory of Thy divinity; I embrace Thee with the affection of all creatures in the world, and I embrace Thee also in the wound of love. The Lord is my strength and my glory. He is become my salvation. Thou shalt draw with joy from the fountains of the Saviour."

These words must be said in honour of the five wounds of our Lord; other prayers may be added, and all offered by the loving Heart of our Lord, which is the mouth-piece of the most Blessed Trinity. Then Almighty God will accept it with as much satisfaction as any other prayers accompanied with much labour.

CHAPTER XLII

A PRAYER OF ST. GERTRUDE

ST. GERTRUDE often used ejaculatory prayers which she directed as burning arrows towards the Heart of her Well-Beloved. One morning, being recollected in the place where she usually made her meditation, she said to our Lord: "O loving Lord, what wilt Thou do with the words which so often come to my thoughts and tongue?" Our Lord then appeared to her and showed her a golden necklace on which each of her aspirations had become a precious stone, brilliant and set separately in the gold. The sight of this necklace threw Gertrude in an ecstacy, and she was inspired with the following prayer:

"O Life of my soul! May the affections of my heart, melted with the fire of love, be united to Thee, and if ever they should be given to any other object, may they become annihilated and die; for Thou art the beauty of all colour, the sweetness of all delight, the fragrance of all scent, the charm of all melody, the tender sweetness of all unions. In Thee is found all happiness, from Thee proceeds all abundance, the tenderest ties draw us to Thee; by Thee love makes its influence felt. Thou art the overflowing abyss of the divinity. O most mighty King of kings, glorious Monarch, illustrious Prince, sweet Ruler, powerful Protector, precious life-giving Stone which ennobles man, most ingenious Workman, kindest Teacher, wisest Counsellor, most devoted Helper, very faithful Friend in whom is found all joy. Thou dost caress the most tenderly, desirest the most ardently, and lovest the most fervently. Thou art the most loving, the most jealous, and the most chaste Spouse, the spring Flower, brilliant in Thy native beauty, the most loving

Brother, the Man youthful, graceful, and strong, the most pleasant Companion, the most generous Host, the most careful and attentive Servant! Yes, I prefer Thee to all; for Thee I renounce all; for Thee I will bear every pain, and I will seek in all only Thy glory. I protest with heart and mouth that Thou only givest life to all these and to all things. In virtue of this fervour which I owe Thee, I unite my intention to the efficacy of Thy prayer; grant that I, by the integrity of divine union, all rebellion being completely destroyed in me, may be led to the summit of perfection."

On the following Sunday, while Gertrude was hearing Mass, during which she meant to communicate, she devoutly recited this prayer; seeing that it gave pleasure to our Lord, she said to Him: "O Loving Lord, I see that these words please Thee; I will advise all those I can influence to repeat them." To which our Lord replied: "No one can give Me what is My own; but whoever recites this prayer devoutly shall feel My knowledge sensibly to increase in his soul, and shall receive within him the splendour of My divinity attracted by his virtues as he who exposes pure gold to the rays of the sun sees the brightness reflected in the gold."

CHAPTER XLIII

MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

ANOTHER way of renewing in ourselves love for the Heart of Jesus is to meditate frequently on the sorrows He chose to bear for our salvation.

Gertrude was very anxious to procure a relic of the true cross, so that the veneration she would pay to it might draw down on her our Lord's favour. He said to her: "If thou desirest the relics which most efficaciously draw My heart to their owners, read the history of My Passion, and carefully consider which words I said the most lovingly; write them down and keep them as relics. In often remembering them, thou shalt deserve to receive My graces much more than by any other relics. And really, if I did not tell thee this by My inspiration thou mightest know it by natural reason. A friend who would recall their former friendship to his friend would say: 'Dost thou remember the love thou hadst for me when thou didst say so-and-so?' rather than 'Dost thou remember the affection thou hadst for me when thou wert in such a place, or in such circumstances?' Thou mayest rest assured that the most precious relics that thou canst have of Me on earth are the words which express the loving feelings of My Heart."

To look at the crucifix renews also in a loving soul feelings which reanimate its fervour. One day St. Gertrude held a crucifix in her hand, considering it most devoutly. She learnt that if anyone only looked with a pious intention at the crucifix our Lord would look at that person with mercy and goodness. Like a bright mirror his soul would receive so beautiful a reflection through divine Love, that the entire heavenly court would look at it. Hence, when a man turns to the cruci-

fix he should imagine our Lord saying to him with a loving voice: "Behold how I hung on the cross, despised and covered with wounds and all my bones dislocated, for love of thee. And My Heart is so full of love for thee that if it were necessary, and thy salvation could not be otherwise wrought, I would suffer again for thee alone all that thou canst imagine that I have suffered for the entire world."

CHAPTER XLIV

SELF-SACRIFICE

IT is dangerous for a soul aspiring to perfection not to watch over its affections. The Devil is always watching, and if he cannot steal our heart from Jesus he tries to put into it some other love which is not according to the will of God. A soul filled with love for the Sacred Heart has only one anxiety, and that is to love our Lord alone and all others for Him.

St. Gertrude's intercourse with people outside her enclosure was a pain to her. In this we see another resemblance between her and St. Margaret Mary. Those in St. Gertrude's confidence give us the reason: the soul that loves God finds only pain in what is out of God. So very often the friend of the Sacred Heart in great spiritual fervour would arise and go to pray, saying: "Behold me, O Lord, wearied with all creatures; I wish to have nothing more to do with anyone, but to attend only to Thee. I leave them and come to Thee, the only real Good, the Joy of my heart and soul." Then, kissing the five sacred wounds, stained with the blood of our Lord, she said this versicle five times: "Hail, Jesus! Spouse full of grace, in Thy divine joys I embrace Thee with the love of the whole world, and I kiss here Thy loving wounds." It seemed to her that at each versicle, pronounced at one of the holy wounds of our Lord, all her weariness disappeared and gave place to a great delight.

As she often acted in this way, she asked our Lord if He approved of this practice, to which she often gave only a few seconds. Our Lord replied: "Every time that thou turnest to Me with this intention I will receive Thee as a friend receives his friend who asks of him hospitality for a day; he shows him by his actions and words every

loving attention, proving his affection by his solicitude and by every sign of joy. In receiving these proofs of affection his friend considers, more than once, how he should return them when he shall have the opportunity. So I also have always in My Heart the sweet thought and intention that, in exchange for all the marks thou hast given Me of thy love on earth, I will reward thee in eternal life. I will do it according to My omnipotent liberality by marks of love multiplied a hundredfold."

CHAPTER XLV

THE REWARD OF LOVE

"THY Heart, O my Jesus, is a Home; that is why Thou didst say: 'Abide in Me.' Happy, happy are they who dwell in Thy House. For too long as a solitary sparrow I have kept away from Thee. When, then, shall I enjoy this grace to dwell in Thee, my Jesus? When will it be true to say that the sparrow has found its home?" (Mgr. Baudry). It will be true when he has given his heart to Jesus. Then, in exchange, Jesus will give His Heart, where a dwelling is found for all the days of his life. O most delightful dwelling!

On the Feast of the Dedication our Lord caused Gertrude to enter a place than which nothing more beautiful could be imagined. It was the Heart of Jesus; it seemed to her a house in which she was to celebrate the feast. When she had entered she almost fainted with the great happiness which inundated her soul, and she said to our Lord: "My Lord, if Thou hadst caused me to enter a place where only Thy feet had trod, it would have been enough for me; but how can I ever respond to the wonderful favour Thou hast granted me?" Our Lord replied: "Thou hast the habit of offering Me the most noble part of thy being, thy heart; I therefore thought to give thee pleasure by offering thee Mine. I am thy God; for thee I am all: virtue, life, wisdom, nourishment, clothing—in a word, all that a loving soul can desire." St. Gertrude said: "If in any point my heart is in accord with Thine, Lord, it is by Thy power alone." "It is according to My nature," replied our Lord, "that when I have prevented a soul with the blessings of my graces I should continue to bestow on her the blessings

of My rewards; if she submits to the good-will of My Heart I am obliged to conform Myself to her wishes."

O delightful dialogue! Our Lord would treat us as we would have treated ourselves. We give Him our heart so that He may dwell therein. He gives us His own so that we may be with Him. And what is the secret of this admirable union? St. Gertrude exclaimed one day: "How is it possible, O my God, that Thou who dost perform such marvellous works should place Thy divine Heart in mine, so miserable? It often happens that, blessed by Thy grace, in joyfully drawing near to Thee I discover my heart in Thine, and from it draw all kinds of happiness." Our Lord replied: "When thou wishest to take hold of any object thou dost stretch forth thy hand, and when thou hast obtained it thou dost again draw it to thee. And I, who languish for love of thee, when I see thee dissipated, given to exterior things and having taken back thy heart, I offer thee Mine. Then, becoming obedient, when thou dost enter into thyself so that thou mayst think of Me, I draw again to myself My Heart with thee, and offer thee in it the sweetness of all the virtues."

Let us therefore return constantly to this blessed dwelling, as the sparrow always returns to its chosen nest. The sparrow escapes if a hand touches its lowly dwelling, but we, on the contrary, the more we are persecuted, the more securely must we hide ourselves in the depths of the divine Heart.

One day Gertrude felt troubled for a thing of small consequence. At the Elevation of the Host she offered her pain for the glory of God. She then saw our Lord array her soul with the sacred Host. He afterwards made her rest on His sacred breast, saying lovingly to her: "This is the place of rest where thou canst repose and console thyself in thy troubles, but whenever thou shalt

stray from it the bitterness in thy heart will serve as a salutary remedy." "O divine Heart of Jesus! be for ever my abode in life; may all my actions only tend to make me return to Thee, and may my heart be turned into ice if I ever forget Thee. O my only love, my eternal inheritance!" (Mgr. Baudry).

CHAPTER XLVI

EXERCISE OF LOVE FOR THE SACRED HEART

THE disciple of the Sacred Heart ought always to be advancing in the love of God.

Such was St. Gertrude's life. She also chose certain days which she specially devoted to increasing in herself divine love, so as to renew the divine flame in her soul. Among her many beautiful compositions perhaps the most beautiful is that which she wrote to increase this holy love. She consecrated three hours, one in the morning, one at midday, and the third at night, to conversing with our Lord and begging from Him some sparks of the fire with which His divine Heart is ever burning. Also, her soul had to learn several lessons of love in the day, one at each canonical hour.

At Matins she entered the school of love.

At Prime she listened to the master.

At Terce she learned the first letters.

At Sext she read easily.

At None she received a diploma of admission into the militia of the friends of the Sacred Heart.

At Vespers she sighed for the combat.

At Compline she asked for the reward promised to those who have loved God.

CHAPTER XLVII

ST. GERTRUDE MODEL OF REPARATION TO THE SACRED HEART

THE Heart of Jesus loves us, but it suffers. In exchange for its love it asks for our hearts. To be consoled for its sorrows it seeks voluntary victims. In its name St. Margaret Mary invited her friends to keep the Holy Hour in the night between Thursday and Friday, and a Communion of reparation on the first Friday of each month.

Reparation is therefore to be the characteristic feature of devotion to the Sacred Heart in modern times. Yet in the thirteenth century St. Gertrude also invited the practice of reparation. There is nothing more touching than the pages wherein we read of the solicitude of the spouse of the Sacred Heart to console her Lord for the insults He receives. They produce in the soul the same transports that we experience in reading in Isaias the prophecy of our Lord's Passion. *Ecce ego, mitte me* (Behold, send me), said this Prophet to our Lord. In the same way St. Gertrude offered herself to find voluntary victims of reparation.

On the Sunday of Septuagesima she was confined to bed by illness, and from discretion was obliged to abstain also from Holy Communion. In order to console her, our Lord received her into His arms and caressed her as a mother caresses her child. While she was enjoying this happiness on our Lord's breast, she said to Him: "O sweetest Jesus, the world is full of evil and robs Thee of Thy glory more at this time than at any other through drunkenness and wickedness. I would wish with my whole heart in reparation to promote Thy glory in this House which is Thine own. Therefore, if Thou wilt

take into Thy service this Thy unworthy servant and make her Thy herald, I will teach my Sisters for love of Thee some new devotion, so that by practising it at this time with fervent piety we may appease Thy anger and soften for Thee the bitterness of the insults Thou dost receive from the world."

Our divine Lord was pleased with the proposal, and said to her: "He who makes himself My herald may be assured that he will enjoy as his own reward all that he shall gain for Me." And Himself choosing the devotion suggested by the Saint, He said: "When anyone eats, drinks, sleeps, or makes use of any other comfort in his necessity, he ought to do it with this intention, saying with heart and mouth: 'Lord, I take this food, or other comfort, in union with the love which made Thee provide it from all eternity for my good, in union with the love which sanctified it when in Thy holy humanity Thou didst use it for the glory of Thy heavenly Father and the salvation of mankind, and I beg of Thee in union with that divine Love to allow this action to contribute to the salvation of all.' Whenever a person makes this offering he places before Me a strong shield which protects Me from the attacks of the wicked." So we see that our merciful Lord only asks as reparation that with a supernatural intention we should offer Him our eating, drinking, sleeping, and other necessary actions. Could we refuse?

On the Sunday of Sexagesima Gertrude was still ill, and a little sad that she could not take part in the offices of the Church, but more preoccupied in consoling her divine Spouse. In the Office for Sexagesima the history of Noah's Ark is related. She heard sung the response: "I will no more curse the earth because of man, for he is made to the image and likeness of his God." Gertrude said: "Alas, Lord! I have often sung this and other responses with so much fervour that I seemed standing

before the throne of Thy glory, striking every note on Thy Heart, as on a sweet-sounding lute, but now that illness has attacked me I must neglect many things."

Our Lord replied: "As thou sayest, My well-beloved, and I acknowledge the truth, thou hast used My divine Heart often in chanting. So I will pay thee in kind and Myself sing thee a sweet chant." And what was this chant? A blessing for Gertrude's disciples. "In olden times I swore by Myself to My servant Noah never again to send a deluge to destroy the earth. I now also swear to thee, by My divinity, that not one of those who shall humbly listen to thy words and shall accept them with a good intention shall perish, but shall by a straight, direct road come to Me who am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And this promise I seal with the seal of My most holy humanity, which I had not assumed when I swore to Noah."

St. Gertrude said: "O Lord God, I should be very happy if Thou wouldst deign to teach Thy servant how I may worthily serve Thee during this week and build an ark of salvation." Our Lord replied: "As Noah's Ark had three divisions, so do thou divide thy day into three. From morning until None (3 p.m.) thou wilt, in the depths of thy heart and in the name of the Church, praise and thank Me for all the blessings I have bestowed on man from the beginning of the world until this present time; thou shalt bless Me in particular for the immense benefit I confer on mankind in immolating Myself each day from early morning until None, on the Altar, to God the Father for the salvation of men. These do not appreciate this blessing, and spend their time in gluttony and drinking. Supply for this ingratitude, My well-beloved, by loving gratitude.

"Then from None until night do each action in union with the holy intention I had in doing the works of My holy humanity. I did them to atone for the negligence

which all men show in not recognizing My benefits and in not rendering Me the worship which they owe Me.

"At night think in the bitterness of thy soul of the wickedness of men; it is not sufficient for them to refuse Me the worship they owe Me for all My benefits, but they also provoke Me to anger by all kinds of sin. In order to expiate their sins, offer Me all the pains and torments I, so innocent, endured in My Passion and Death."

Our Lord, showing His tenderness in a wonderful way, appeared before St. Gertrude's soul and said to her: "In thy turn console Me who have Myself consoled thee." In saying these words the Omnipotent Lord, passionate Lover of faithful souls, stooped with infinite sweetness and seemed to expect an embrace. But Gertrude, bewildered by the unheard-of condescension, replied with humble devotion and from the depth of her heart: "How can this be? Thou my God and Creator, and I thy creature!" In pronouncing these words she saw herself, by the divine power, drawn nearer to the Lord, her divine Master.

As she complained to Him of being unable to hear Mass or receive Holy Communion our Lord told her to say the *Confiteor*, then He added: "May My divinity have pity on thee and forgive thee all thy sins." And extending His holy hand, He gave her His blessing. As Gertrude's soul bowed down to receive it, our Lord drew it to His Sacred Heart and chanted the response: "Man was made to the image of God." Then, kissing her eyes, ears, mouth, heart, feet, and hands, He repeated each time the same words, as, in His infinite tenderness and goodness, He renewed in her soul His divine image and likeness.

At the time of the carnival men, created to the image of God, forget their glorious privilege and give themselves up to drink and all kinds of wickedness. Happy the soul

who during this time keeps close to Jesus, seeking to console Him for such excesses. In exchange for these consolations He restored in St. Gertrude's soul the image of God and showered down on her tokens of His love.

But this Lord is full of condescension for His creatures, and even for the natural pleasure they may take in food. The following incident took place on the Thursday of Quinquagesima, a day on which the people abandoned themselves more than ever to drink and sin. Hearing the bell ring soon after Lauds, summoning the labourers of the house to breakfast, Gertrude, sighing, said to our Lord: "Alas! how many men rise early in order to offend Thee in eating." Our Lord, with a smile full of kindness, replied: "Do not sigh, My beloved; they for whom they have just rung the bell are not among those who offend Me. They only wish, in this repast, to obtain the strength they need to work well. So I am pleased they should have this food, as one is well pleased to see his horse fed, so that he may be able to work."

CHAPTER XLVIII

JESUS TAKES PLEASURE IN REPARATION

OUR Lord willed to make His Spouse drink with Him of the bitterness of His Passion. He had said to St. Mechtilde: "I take such pleasure in her soul that oftentimes when I am offended by others I rest happily in her. I then afflict her with some pain, either of body or mind which, in union with My Passion, she accepts with so much patience and humility that I am appeased by her love and forgive numberless sinners."

And so it is that when a loving soul turns with all her strength to our Lord with the will to atone as far as she is able for all that He suffers in His Heart, if in the fervour of her prayer she offers Him her pure caresses, she often disarms Him to such a degree that, reconciled by her, He spares the whole world.

On the eve of Quinquagesima, after enjoying great happiness, Gertrude felt much annoyed, and she could not be consoled, though the reason of her trouble was of no importance. She asked our Lord to deliver her from it, but He replied: "If thou wishest to ease Me of My burden thou must carry thy own; let Me look into thy heart: the melodious cry of thy desires enchants Me; the gracious variety of affections that thou dost offer to Me charms Me. I delight in the assured confidence which makes thee desire Me with all the strength of thy soul, and sweetly I breathe on its tenderness which causes thee to wish for all the happiness of eternal life. I see disclosed this rich treasury of thy heart from which I can draw for all the good-will thou hast to do good to all who need it. But if thou wert in happiness

and prosperity I should be deprived of all this satisfaction."

She had then the desire to obtain from our Lord that during these three days, when men offended Him so much, she might offer Him what was most pleasing to Him. To respond to this desire our Lord said: "Thou canst offer Me nothing more pleasing than to accept patiently all the interior and exterior pains that may come to thee in union with My Passion, and to resign thyself to do that which causes thee the most repugnance. This thou mayst accomplish, for example, in guarding and mortifying thy senses. A great reward may be hoped for from My goodness by anyone who does this in memory of My Passion."

Gertrude replied: "I would also learn now from Thy loving Heart by what prayers I may the more surely appease Thee in these three days when men provoke Thy anger." Our Lord replied: "I will willingly accept that the *Pater Noster* or the *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes* should be recited three times, making these offerings to My eternal Father:

"1. They should offer all that My Holy Heart suffered while on earth for the salvation of man, in praising God, rendering Him thanks, in sighing and praying before Him, offering Him My desires and My love to expiate all the evil feelings with which the heart of man is weighed down.

"2. They should offer to God, My Father, all the holy and pure acts of My mouth, both in the temperance I observed with regard to food and words, and in the preaching and continual prayer in which I wearied for the salvation of men, and this in expiation of all the sins committed in the universal Church by gluttony and drunkenness or by evil or unnecessary words.

"3. They should offer to God, My Father, all the actions of My Holy Body and the movements of all My

members during My entire life, with all the bitterness of My Passion and the death I endured for the redemption of man. All this must be offered in reparation for the sins which people in the world commit recklessly at this time by all their actions, thus endangering their eternal salvation."

CHAPTER XLIX

OUR LORD IS AFFLICTED BY THE SINS OF LAYMEN AND RELIGIOUS

LATER on our Lord often showed Himself to St. Margaret Mary as He was when Pilate presented Him to the Jews, saying "Ecce homo," and these visions took place principally during the carnival. Gertrude also saw her divine Spouse covered with blood on the Sunday of Quinquagesima. Towards the hour of Terce our Lord appeared to her in the state in which He was after the scourging; she saw Him tied to the pillar between two executioners, one of whom seemed to strike Him with thorns, and the other with a whip of knotted cords. Both struck Him on the face, which caused His sacred countenance to be in such a condition that the heart of Gertrude was pierced with compassion. During the whole of this day each time this vision came again before her mind it was impossible for her to restrain her tears. She could not think that any man could have appeared more pitiable than our Lord did on this occasion. The side of the face that had been struck with the thorns was so torn that the pupil of the eye had not been spared, and on the other side our Saviour's face was swollen and discoloured by the blows from the knotted cord. The excessive pain caused our Lord to turn His face away, and while He thus seemed to shun one tormentor, the other the more easily struck Him violently.

Turning to St. Gertrude, our Lord said to her: "Hast thou not read what is written of Me: 'We have thought Him as it were a leper'?" "Ah, Lord," she cried, "how could the pain of Thy beautiful face be relieved?" Our Lord answered: "In going over My Passion in thy heart

with a loving compassion, and, in this charitable disposition, praying for sinners. A heart thus contrite will place on My face balsam which will relieve all its pain."

Gertrude understood the two executioners to represent lay-people who, sinning publicly, strike our Lord with thorns, and religious who sin against their rule and seem to strike Him with a knotted cord. Both strike Him on the face, in that they are not ashamed to sin before His eyes, now that He reigns in heaven.

At the Introit of the Mass Gertrude called upon our Lord, applying to herself the words they were chanting; it seemed to her that the anger provoked in these days justified their suitability. Our Lord then said to her: "Be thou My protector; thou, My well-beloved, resolve to defend Me according to thy power from the insults which overwhelm Me, particularly at this time. See how as now I am rejected by others, so I wish to rest and take refuge with thee." St. Gertrude, embracing her Beloved with all her strength, tried to hide Him in her heart, but suddenly she found herself so intimately united to God that her senses failed and she could no longer follow the usages of the convent, not even rising and sitting with the others. Someone warned her, and she found she was acting differently from the others, whereupon she besought our Lord that He would so govern her body that no singularity might appear in her. Our Lord replied: "Give to Me the affection which is called love, so that it may replace thee; thou canst then guard the movements of thy body."

CHAPTER L

THE REWARD GIVEN TO OUR ACTS OF REPARATION

THE following night our Lord appeared sitting on the throne of His glory. St. John the Evangelist was sitting at His feet writing, when our Lord said to him: "I wish note to be taken carefully of all the homage I received yesterday and shall receive during the next two days from this community. And as the Father has given Me all judgment, I will first give faithfully to each one after death good measure for all the pains they have taken to perform good works; then I will add a measure full and running over, taken from the fruit of My Passion and Death. I will then conduct them, with this record, to My Father, who in His omnipotence and paternal kindness will add another measure full and pressed down in reward for the good works that have been done to please Me in these days when the wicked persecute Me. For I am more faithful than anyone, and I could not do otherwise than recognize and recompense the gifts I have received from My benefactors. I will not do less than King David, who all his life acknowledged worthily the services rendered to him, yet at the approach of death, after having resigned the kingdom into the hands of his son Solomon, he said to him: 'Show favour to the sons of Berzelial of Galaad, and let them sit at thy table, because they came to meet me when I fled before thy brother Absalom.' A service rendered in time of adversity is more thankfully received and merits greater reward than one rendered in time of prosperity. So I also give greater rewards to those who are faithful to Me when others persecute Me."

While our Lord was speaking, St. John, seated, continued writing, from time to time dipping his pen into an inkstand he held in his hand, when he wrote black letters. At other times he dipped his pen into the wound made in our Lord's side, which was open before him, and then he wrote in red letters. Sometimes he added to this red writing black or gold letters. Gertrude understood that the good works recorded in black were those that religious performed by custom, as fasting, etc. Those in red signified works wrought in memory of our Lord's Passion with the intention of offering reparation for the sins committed in the Church, and those in red, with which black or gold were mixed, signified those done in memory of the Passion, but also to beg some personal favour, black signifying favours asked for self. But actions done purely for the glory of God, in union with the Passion of our Saviour and for the salvation of all, with no regard to merit or reward, but solely for the praise and love of God, these were written in letters of gold. The first-named works no doubt receive a great reward from God, but those done purely for the glory of God have much more merit and dignity and entitle man to receive a great recompense.

Gertrude also saw that to the recorded prayers said by religious for the glory of God a note was added naming the person by whose advice and example the others had been influenced in this matter. In which was seen the immense goodness and liberality of God, who loves to give a double recompense to the little our natural weakness enables us simply to offer Him.

St. Gertrude then asked our Lord this question: "Lord, to write these notes, why didst Thou not take St. Benedict, to whose Order this monastery belongs, or any other Saint rather than St. John?" Our Lord replied: "Because My beloved disciple has written more than anyone on the love of God and one's

neighbour, therefore I bestowed this charge on him. Complete confidence can be placed in him, who has thus written to fulfil worthily the intentions of My divine and royal bounty, and you yourself can only gain by it."

CHAPTER LI

EXPIATION AT OTHER TIMES THAN THE CARNIVAL

WHILE St. John took note of the acts of reparation performed by the community, Gertrude saw a space was left in the book of the heavenly secretary. Our Lord was pleased to give the reason of this to His spouse. He said: "You are accustomed at this time to offer Me all your prayers and desires in memory of My Passion, and I have caused these to be exactly recorded; but hitherto you have not offered Me in memory of My Passsion the good works you accomplish, so the vacant spaces are left for them."

St. Gertrude said: "And how, O most loving Lord, can we acquit ourselves of this worthily?" "By doing all in union with My Passion," our Lord replied. So Gertrude continued to offer reparation to her divine Master through His Sacred Heart; by it she would make satisfaction for the whole world.

On the second Sunday of Lent, inspired by the Holy Spirit, she recited five *Paters* in honour of our Lord's wounds in reparation for all the sins committed all over the world by the three powers of the soul. She offered these *Paters* to our Lord in union with the perfect intention which drew this prayer from His Sacred Heart. There it had been sanctified, so that it might be communicated to all for their salvation, to correct the faults they had committed and to repair all the negligences of which the weakness, ignorance, and malice of man had rendered him guilty against the invincible omnipotence, inimitable wisdom, and gratuitous superabundance of the divine goodness.

While she made this offering, our Lord, full of goodness,

appeared, and seemed appeased and satisfied more than can be expressed; extending His hand, He made the sign of the cross over her from head to foot, blessing her with great love. Then, when He had thus blessed her, He led her lovingly before God, His Father, who looked on her approvingly, received her tenderly, and blessed her also. He gave her the blessing given to all mankind, so that she in herself received the blessings due to all rightly disposed to receive it.

St. Gertrude's companion adds: "We can therefore make satisfaction by five *Paters* for all the corporal sins committed by man; and by three *Paters* for those committed in the soul by all in the Church of God, and so receive the effects of this salutary blessing from Jesus Christ, Son of God, who has deigned to make Himself Chief and Spouse of the Church."

CHAPTER LII

REPARATION FOR THE CHURCH

ON *Lætare* Sunday St. Gertrude asked our Lord what she could do that week for His glory. Our Lord again asked for reparation. "Compel those whom thou hast adorned during the seven preceding weeks with the precious merits of My life on the earth to come, for they must eat with Me."

On this Sunday the Gospel is that of the multiplication of loaves. To this mysterious banquet Jesus invites souls. Gertrude responded by the admirable protestation we have already spoken of (Chapter V.).

At once she understood that the outer Church, adorned with brilliant gems, was presented to our Lord. He said to her: "Thou shalt to-day serve this multitude."

Thus we see Gertrude placed at the service of the Church by her beloved Spouse. She began immediately an exercise of reparation which may serve as a model to the friends of the Sacred Heart.

At once, by divine inspiration, she knelt at our Saviour's feet; she kissed the wound in His left foot, in expiation for all the sins committed in the whole Church, by thought, desire, and will. She begged our Lord to make this satisfaction efficacious by uniting it to that, a thousand times more precious, by which He blotted out the sins of the world. Then she kissed the wound in our Lord's right foot to make reparation for all that has been omitted in the Church by neglecting good thoughts, holy desires, and good intentions. She begged our Lord to make good this neglect by giving the Church the most precious atonement with which He paid the debt of all mankind. Then she kissed the wound of the left hand very devoutly, proposing by this act of reparation to atone for all the

sins committed in the world by words and actions; for this intention she again asked our Lord to give the Church the real expiation which was so precious that it repaired all our sins of word and act. She then kissed the wound in the right hand to supply the omissions of good words and actions in the whole world, and she begged of our Lord to deign to bestow His infinite perfections on the Church to supply what was wanting to it.

At the end she approached the loving wound in our Lord's side. She kissed it with all the tenderness of her heart, and begged our Lord now that He had offered abundant satisfaction for all sins, and sufficiently supplied what had been omitted, to deign in His inexhaustible and divine goodness to give to the Church, His holy Spouse, the merits of His most holy life to complete her desires.

When a loving soul tends with all its strength towards our Lord, with a resolute will to make reparation as far as it can for all that our Lord suffers in His honour, by the fervour of its prayers and its pure caresses, it so appeases Him that He readily consents to forgive and spare the whole world.

CHAPTER LIII

OF CONFORMITY OF WILL WITH THE SACRED HEART

ON the evening of Palm Sunday, remembering that we are told in the Gospel that our Lord went to the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany, St. Gertrude was filled with a great desire to offer Him hospitality. She went to kneel before a crucifix there; embracing with fervour the wound in the holy side of our Lord, she sought to be penetrated with all the desires of the Heart of the Son of God; she begged Him by the love which had drawn so many prayers from His loving Heart to deign to enter the poor abode of her unworthy heart.

Our good Lord, who listens at once to those who call upon Him, favoured her with His beloved presence, saying to her: "I have come; what wilt thou give Me?" "May He who is my salvation," said St. Gertrude, "be most welcome. He is all my desire, my only and true good." Then she added: "Alas, Lord! I have prepared nothing, unworthy as I am, that may befit Thy magnificence, but I offer to Thee all that I am, and I beg of Thee that Thou wilt Thyself prepare in me whatever shall give Thee the greatest pleasure."

Our Lord replied: "If thou wilt that I so act towards thee, give Me the key of thy soul, so that I may take and replace all as it suits Me, for My greater ease and convenience." "And what is this key, Lord?" asked the Saint. "It is thy will," our Lord replied.

These words made her understand that if we wish to offer hospitality to our Lord we must give Him the key of our own will, abandoning ourselves entirely to His good pleasure, expecting with full confidence that in His

goodness He will make all things conduce to our salvation. Then our Lord enters, and fulfils all He desires to accomplish in our hearts and souls.

St. Gertrude, feeling herself divinely inspired, in order to sanctify her members, recited three hundred and sixty-five times those words of the Gospel: " Not my will but Thine be done, O loving Jesus." And she understood that this was very pleasing to our Lord.

CHAPTER LIV

THE SACRED HEART AND OUR ORDINARY ACTIONS

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES says: "Scarlet, purple, or fine crimson cloth makes a precious and royal garment, not because of the cloth, but because of the colour. The works of good Christians are of such value that they merit heaven, but, Theotimus, not because they come from us and are, as it were, the cloth of our hearts, but because they are dyed with the Blood of the Son of God. I mean that they are so inasmuch as our Saviour sanctifies our works by the merits of His Precious Blood" (*On the Love of God*).

A soul who understands the truth has only one anxiety, and that is to offer with jealous care all her works to our Lord, so that He may steep them in the blood from His wounds, and so communicate to them a divine value. We must beg earnestly that He would place them, by preference, in the wound of His sacred side.

One day when Gertrude was ill she wished, from her couch, to hear what was sung in the choir. "O my Lord, if it were not so far away, I might catch some words of what they sing which might lift my soul to Thee." Our Lord replied: "My beloved, if thou art ignorant of what they sing at present, look at Me, see what passes in My Heart. It contains all that can please thee."

St. Gertrude at once understood what our Lord meant. As a person who is fatigued and is out of breath stands with open mouth drawing in fresh life, so the members of Christ seem to absorb ceaselessly all the good works done in the Church; they offer them purified and enriched to the eternal praise of the most Holy Trinity. But works which are done purely for the glory of God are

absorbed in a marvellous manner by the Sacred Heart, and there raised higher and made perfect. There is no doubt but that works sanctified by the holy members of Christ lift the soul to a degree of sanctity above human understanding; but the works that the Sacred Heart would exalt by union with itself, thus lifting them to perfection, are as much more holy and dignified as a man or even a living animal is higher than a dead body.

Therefore how advantageous is it to perform all our works in union with the divine Heart. Life is then given to them, the life of the Sacred Heart. The most ordinary works can be enriched and dignified. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God" (St. Paul). And so food and sleep, these two necessities of our nature, may become divine works! What a marvel of mercy and goodness!

St. Gertrude was pressed to take food on account of her great weakness. As she energetically refused to eat before having heard the Passion read (this happened on Palm Sunday), she asked our Lord, according to her custom, what she should do. Our Lord replied: "Take thy food, My beloved, in union with that love which thy Spouse showed thee on the cross. I only refused to drink after having tasted the wine mixed with myrrh." Gertrude willingly submitted, giving thanks to God. And our Lord offered her His Heart, saying: "This is the cup which in remembrance bears engraved on it the words: 'When He had tasted, He would not drink! I offer to thee this cup, the desire which urged Me to refuse to drink so that thou mightest drink thyself. Thou canst do it safely. I am a physician who deserves to have confidence placed in Him. I tasted it first, and in doing so prepared carefully the cup for thy salvation. It was in order to hasten My death that this cup of wine and myrrh was offered Me, but the desire I had to suffer much for man prevented Me from drinking it. Do thou, on the

contrary, in union with this same love, take all that is necessary for thee in order to live longer in My service.

" In the cup which was offered Me on Calvary consider three things: It was wine mixed with gall and vinegar. In the same way, whatever thou mayest do, have three intentions: (1) To do all joyfully for My greater glory—this is signified by the wine; (2) to accept relief only in order that thou mayest suffer longer for My love—this is the meaning of the myrrh; (3) to consent for My love, to remain on earth, deprived of seeing My face in heaven, as long as it shall please Me—this is what is meant by the gall.

" As long as thou shalt accept relief in thy pains with this intention, it shall be to Me as though a friend drank all the gall, offering to his friend the most delicious wine in its stead."

In taking this food Gertrude said the following prayer in her heart:

" May the strength of Thy divine love, O Jesus, unite me wholly to Thee." And when she drank she said: " Make Thy charity, which was so great, flow abundantly in me, O Lord. Instead of drinking what was intended to hasten Thy death, Thou didst refuse it in order to suffer more for us. May this drink penetrate me entirely, and even through all my members, giving strength to all my actions, my joys, and the senses of my body and soul, to Thy eternal praise, my God !"

Gertrude asked if our Lord would accept a similar offering from others. Our Lord answered: " With every morsel that anyone shall take with a like intention, I will consider that I took it with them, and My hunger as being satisfied. When anyone shall so drink I will consider as though I had drunk with them a drink of love, which would inflame and excite our mutual love. Also, at the right time, I will make such a one feel the strength of My love according to My power."

Faithful to this practice, when Gertrude felt herself one night spent with a burning fever she took a grape with the intention of refreshing her body and the Heart of Jesus. Our Lord accepted this action as a magnificent gift, and said to her: " I am now rewarded for the bitterness I endured on the cross for thy love, for instead of that nauseous draught I am enjoying in My Heart untold sweetness."

Gertrude, having thrown aside the skin and seeds of the grape, Satan, disturber of all good, appeared gathering up what the Saint had thrown away, in proof of the fault she had committed in eating before Matins. But he had scarcely touched the skin of the grape when he was burnt, and, suffering horribly, he flew from the house howling. The wretch had not known Gertrude's supernatural intention.

CHAPTER LV

SANCTIFICATION OF SLEEP AND REST

SLEEP and rest, as effectually as action, unite us to the Sacred Heart, if we remember in taking them to to direct our intention.

On Palm Sunday, after dinner, Gertrude placed herself on her couch to rest her weary limbs, though she had less thought of sleeping than of escaping a crowd of visitors. She said to our Lord: "In remembrance of the holy instruction Thou didst give this day in the Temple I hide myself from visitors in order that I may attend to Thee, my Beloved, and I beg that Thou wouldst speak to my soul.

"As My divinity rested in My humanity, so to-day may My divinity rest in thy weariness," our Lord replied.

As Gertrude perceived that no one disturbed her, believing her asleep, she asked our Lord if she should let them know that she was awake, so that if anyone needed her they might come. Our Lord replied: "No; let them deserve the reward which I shall be so ready to bestow on them for their charity." He then added: "Here are two points for your meditation: First, there is nothing more useful to man than to tire himself with labour, for My divinity takes delight in the rest he takes; also, nothing is then more useful than to help others by kind actions."

On another day Gertrude had spent many hours in prayer. Feeling herself wearied, she prepared to leave her Crucified Love, saying to Him: "Good-night, my Beloved Lord; allow me to regain the strength which I seem to have entirely lost in meditating on Thee." After saying this, she tried to sleep, but our Lord from His cross stretched out His right arm, placing it round her

neck, and whispered sweetly in her ear: "Listen, My beloved; I will sing thee a song of love." He began at once singing:

"My child, Thou'rt growing weary,
My Love has kept thee long;
Thou needs must take a little sleep,
List, then, unto My song.
I place My right arm round thee,
Detached from cross sublime;
Thy head I lay upon My Breast,
And sing of Love divine.

"If Love endureth ever
While feeble nature tires,
Thy love to Me is dear delight
And constant joy inspires.
Give, then, thy love unto thy God,
Thy feeble nature too;
He'll purify and strengthen all,
And make thee live anew."

Our Lord did not allow her to sleep one instant, until she was completely spent with fatigue, when she was obliged to rest. At last she slept a little before dawn; but our Lord, who never leaves those who love Him, appeared to her in a dream. He warmed her delightfully on His Sacred Heart, and seemed to offer her delicious food from the wound of His sacred side. He conveyed each morsel to her mouth Himself with admirable love, in order to restore her strength. Invigorated by this mysterious food, given during her sleep, she awoke feeling wonderfully strengthened, and gave thanks to God.

These delightful times of sleeplessness were not uncommon to Gertrude, who was frequently ill. On another occasion she fell into a state of great weakness. According to her usual custom, she offered her suffering to our Lord for His eternal praise and for the salvation of all. Our Lord compassionated her in her sufferings, and taught her to invoke Him in these words: "By the in-

effable sweetness with which during all eternity Thou didst rest in the bosom of God the Father, by Thy delightful repose of nine months in the Virgin's womb, by the joy Thou hast deigned to feel in any loving soul, I beg of Thee, most merciful Lord, for my ease and Thy eternal praise, to grant me some rest so that my body may be refreshed." Then our Lord said: "Come, My chosen one, rest on My Heart, and see if My love, always on the alert, will allow thee to rest."

When she had rested her head on the divine Heart and heard its beating, she said: "O sweetest Friend, what does that beating mean that I hear?" Our Lord replied: "It says this: whenever anyone feels spent by watching and wearied out, and says to Me the prayer I have taught thee to obtain rest for My glory and to renew his strength, if I do not hear him at once and he continues to bear his weakness with patience and humility, My loving-kindness and divine goodness will receive him with so much the greater joy."

CHAPTER LVI

SADNESS WITHIN AND TEMPTATION WITHOUT

THE spiritual life abounds in temptations. It is subject to periods of trial which are inevitable. The soul devoted to the Sacred Heart must expect this, and it must know how to get benefit from these trials. The Well-Beloved wishes that at these times the soul should abandon itself entirely to Him and expect from Him alone strength and consolation.

One day Gertrude, feeling depressed and sad, said to our Lord: "What will become of me? What wilt Thou do for me?"

Our Lord replied: "As a mother consoles her child, I will also console thee. Hast thou ever seen a mother caress her little one? She expects from it, first, that it should embrace her, and, notwithstanding its weakness, the child rises and lifts its little arms to comply with her desire. Thou also must rise with a great effort by contemplation to enjoy the object of thy love. In the second place, the mother exercises the child's will, saying, 'Wilt thou have this or that?' and sometimes she gives neither. So God sometimes tries man with a fear of great affliction which never comes to pass, but as soon as man has submitted his will that suffices, and God then prepares for him an eternal reward. In the third place, no one except the mother can understand what the child tries to say, as it is too young to articulate the words. In the same way none but God knows man's intentions nor can judge him. Men only judge from what they see."

Gertrude understood this divine lesson, but sorrow does not come only from within, but sometimes from without, even from those who ought to help us to bear life's burden.

On the day of the Dedication Gertrude said to our Lord: "O God of goodness, how can I attain to Thee—I, so weak. I do not see even a trace of any virtue in my soul?" Our Lord replied: "In any case thou knowest that many have caused thee pain in speaking against thee." "I know it, Lord," she answered. "Alas! my faults have often given scandal to others." "Well, then," replied our Lord, "make so many virtues of the words of thy detractors, and when thou shalt have adorned thyself with them thou canst come to Me, and through My compassion I will lovingly welcome thee." And our Lord deigned to assure her that the blame of those who spoke against her would only add to the beauty of her spiritual adornment. The Sacred Heart bestowed on her the greater tokens of its love according to the wickedness of her enemies.

On another day she was grieving because a person for whose salvation she had zealously laboured did not respond to her care, and, through a kind of contempt, did just the contrary to what the Saint had recommended her. Gertrude was troubled and took refuge near our Lord, who tenderly consoled her, saying: "Be not sad, My daughter. I have permitted this in order to ensure thy salvation. I dearly love to speak and dwell with thee, and by this means I would enjoy more of this happiness. A mother loves her little child tenderly and wishes to have it always with her. When it goes to play with its little companions, she places some terrifying thing in its way, so that it flies back to her for refuge. I also wish to have thee always at My side; so I allow thy friends to cause thee pain, and that thou shouldst find no one whom thou canst trust entirely. Then art thou obliged to have recourse to Me with the greater assurance, seeing that there thou dost find more abundant joy and more sure fidelity." Our Lord then pressed her to His Heart, as one would a little child, saying: "A loving mother tries

by her kisses to relieve the troubles of her child, so I would wish to calm all thy pains and sorrows by loving words."

After Gertrude had tasted the infinite sweetness of divine consolation on the Heart of Jesus, He offered it to her, saying: "Behold, My beloved, what is most hidden in My Heart; see with what fidelity I have there placed and adorned all that thou hast done to please Me, and that for the greater good and spiritual profit of thy soul. See if thou canst complain that I have failed thee by even a single word."

Gertrude did as our Lord commanded her, and saw that the pain of which we have spoken had been adorned by Him with the most beautiful flowers of a most brilliant golden colour. St. Gertrude cried out: "What more beautiful rewards, what more precious ornaments, must they not receive from Thy liberality, merciful Lord, who bear greater pains and are not helped by the consolations I, so unworthy, receive. And yet I do not suffer with sufficient patience all that happens to me."

Our Lord replied: "In this as in all else I show My tender care for thee. I act as a mother towards the child of all her love; when she cannot adorn it with gold and silver, of which it could not bear the weight, she adorns it with beautiful light flowers, which are no burden but delightful. In this way I soften thy pains so that thou shouldst not faint under their weight, and I leave thee not without merit and the exercise of patience. A mother who would warm her child holds her hand between the child and the fire, so when I wish to try My elect with sorrow I do not allow the trial to crush them completely; I only wish to try them and save them."

In her great gratitude Gertrude burst forth into expressions of praise and love. On doing so she understood a mystery: the ornaments given in reward of her sufferings under the appearance of light and brilliant flowers seemed

to get heavier in proportion as she sung the praises of God. Thanksgiving to God in adversity supplies what is wanting in the weight of our pains; their value is in the same proportion as a vessel made of gold is to one of silver-gilt.

The sorrows of pious souls come also from their forgetfulness of the Beloved and carelessness in their devotions; the Sacred Heart would Itself console His friends and prove that His tenderness is far above our foolishness and inconstancy.

One Friday evening Gertrude was contemplating a crucifix with deep compunction. "My loving Lord and Creator," she said, "what torments Thou didst suffer on this day for my salvation! How unfaithful I am; I have not even remembered it was to-day it all happened, and I have allowed my thoughts to be occupied with other things. I have not remembered at each hour what Thou, my eternal Salvation, didst endure for me; I have forgotten that Thou, the Life which giveth life to all, didst die for my love."

Our Lord from His cross replied: "I have supplied for thy negligence; at each hour I gathered in My Heart what thou shouldst have gathered in thine, and by that it was so extended that I waited with impatience the time when thou shouldst address to Me thy prayer, in union with which I offer to God, My Father, all that I have supplied for thee to-day, for if I do not add thy intention all that I have done could not profit thee."

"From this," says St. Gertrude, "we may recognize the constant love of God for man; He accepts a simple thought of regret for our negligences, and He offers to God, His father, complete satisfaction in such a marvellous way for our failings that it deserves the praises of all men."

CHAPTER LVII

THE SACRED HEART AND OUR FAULTS

SOULS devoted to the Sacred Heart are tormented by the constant recurrence of their faults. It seems useless to make efforts; their imperfections are constantly reappearing. They even seem to increase as their souls advance in life. This is a real grief for a faithful soul.

"Alas! most merciful Jesus," says St. Gertrude, "wilt Thou not Thyself deliver me from all these miseries against which I can do nothing? Free me and place me near Thee."

How easily does the teaching of St. Gertrude, or rather that of the Sacred Heart, calm our anxiety without diminishing our willingness to fight against our faults! One only thing is asked of us: that we should hate our imperfections.

Our Lord said to St. Gertrude that there were certain faults the knowledge of which caused keen feelings of compunction and humility in men, and therefore from these faults men drew good. He said He allowed His best friends to fall into these, as it gave them many occasions of gaining merit. There were other faults, He said, of which men took little notice, or, what was worse, rather excused them in themselves and took no pains to correct them. These faults cause men to be in great danger of losing their souls. He then said to St. Gertrude: "Thy soul is entirely free from these."

We must therefore generously acknowledge our faults; it is an indispensable condition. The Sacred Heart causes us gently to see them when we allow ourselves to be led by His grace. "Many times, O Lord," says St. Gertrude, "Thou hast led me willingly to acknowledge my faults,

and Thou hast so spared me any shame that one would have thought (an impossible thing) that Thou wouldst have forfeited half Thy kingdom if my selfish fear had been touched. So, while telling me that the faults of certain persons displeased Thee, I discovered, on considering myself, that I was more guilty than any of them, and yet Thou didst never by the smallest sign show that Thou didst see anything of the sort in me, were it ever so little."

In this way does our Lord treat a soul devoted to His Sacred Heart! But why does He still leave it its imperfections? Gertrude had a habit of frequently saying in conversation, without reason or necessity, "God knows." She reproached herself with the fault and begged of our Lord to cure her of it, so that she might never again pronounce His adorable Name in vain. Our Lord, full of goodness, answered her tenderly: "And why wouldst thou deprive Me of this honour and lose the reward that is thine whenever thou dost recognize this or any other defect, and propose to amend in future? When from love of Me anyone strives to correct his failings he shows Me as much fidelity and honour as a soldier does to his commander who lays his enemies at his Commander's feet after fighting bravely."

Then Gertrude rested on our Lord's Heart, and feeling her own so weak, she said: "I offer Thee, O Lord, my poor heart with all my will and affections; see if Thou wilt deign to take pleasure in it." Our Lord replied: "I accept thy poor heart, so lovingly offered, with more pleasure than I should accept a stronger heart. In the same way a wild animal slain by hunters is preferred as food to a domestic animal, as its flesh is more palatable and tender." "O Heart of Jesus, and dost Thou prefer the wild animal which will not allow itself to be tamed? Do Thou, then, follow after us, and may we fall into Thy snares!"

Faults do not hinder graces being given: here is an

instance. Gertrude prayed for a certain person, and she saw a stream clear as crystal flow from our Lord's Heart into the heart of the person for whom she prayed. Seeing this, she asked our Lord: "Lord, how can this be of service to this soul, as she does not know what Thou givest her?"

Our Lord replied: "When a physician gives medicine to a sick person, those who are present do not at once see its effect; the patient himself only perceives it when he is cured." Gertrude continued: "Why, O Lord, dost Thou not take away from this person all her bad habits and faults, since I have begged Thee so long?" "They often said," replied our Lord, "of the Infant Jesus—that is, of Me—that He advanced in age and grace before God and man. So this person makes progress from hour to hour, changing her vices into virtues. I will forgive her all that is in her of human nature, so that after this life she may receive what I have prepared for mankind."

But if our faults are not an obstacle to the outpouring of grace, are they not at least a hindrance to tokens of love from the Sacred Heart?

Gertrude was feeling one day very discouraged at the sight of her ever-recurring miseries. Our Lord appeared lovingly to her and said to the Angels who seemed surprised: "I am not able to resist following this soul, who has carried away My Heart by her humility."

Our Lord had made a similar reply to St. Mechtilde, whom St. Gertrude had begged to pray for the correction of her faults. "As a field covered with manure only becomes more fertile, so the knowledge she has of her faults makes her bear more delicious fruits of virtue." He added: "I have given her for each of her defects a grace which makes them in My eyes completely corrected; but when later I shall have completely transformed them into virtues, her soul will shine with great splendour."

CHAPTER LVIII

THE SACRED HEART AND CONFESSION

BEING jealous for the salvation and perfection of His elect, our Lord sometimes makes an otherwise light burden weigh very heavily, giving them an opportunity of increasing their merit. He acted so with St. Gertrude in the matter of confession. By His conduct towards her He wished to show us how ready He is to come to our help in order to make us vanquish our repugnances.

One day He caused St. Gertrude to feel confession so painful that she thought she would never be able to make it. So she placed her trouble before our Lord as well as she could in prayer. She received this reply: "Wilt thou, therefore, throw the weight of this confession so completely on Me as not to suffer thyself in making it?" "That is the plain truth," she answered; "I trust entirely and fully in Thy power and goodness, my loving Lord. Yet I know well how unbecoming my conduct is, that after having offended Thee by my sins I should still be unwilling to make some satisfaction, if it were only by remembering them in the bitterness of my soul."

Our Lord agreed to this, and she strove to remember all her sins; but her skin seemed as torn as though she were rolled in thorns. How perfectly this describes the pain suffered from worrying before confession! Gertrude showed this trouble to the Father of Mercy so that He might heal her as her faithful and kind physician. He inclined towards her, saying with His usual goodness: "With My divine breath I will warm the bath of confession for thee. When thou shalt have sufficiently bathed therein thou shalt present thyself before Me without the smallest stain." The thought then came to her

that she should prepare at once for this bath, and she said to our Lord: "For love of Thee, and for Thy honour, I will strip myself of all human respect; even if I had to tell my sins to the whole world I would be quite willing."

After this act our Lord covered her with His mantle and kept her near His Heart until the bath was ready. As the time for her confession drew near her trouble increased. Our Lord gave her to understand that she might choose to purify her soul either in the perfumed dew of tears of love or in the warm but always painful bath of confession. "No, Lord," she said without hesitation: "I prefer the bath Thou hast warmed with Thy divine breath." Our Lord replied: "May it be for thee unto life eternal."

After confession, having retired to pray, she felt that our Lord deigned to bless her by His presence. What an extraordinary disposition of Providence! Our Lord Himself had made confession so painful to her that she had an enormous difficulty in mentioning even things which sometimes are spoken of publicly as though in boast. After confession, contemplating the wound in our Lord's left hand, she felt as one who had just left a bath in great perspiration, until she had said the penance given her by the priest; but as the doing of the penance necessitated some delay, she was sorrowful, and asked herself if she might not enjoy intimately and freely the presence of her loving Lord before saying it. Also, when the priest at the altar offered the Sacred Host which reconciles, really and truly, man with God in effacing all their sins, she offered it herself to our Lord in thanksgiving for the grace she had just received and in expiation of her sins. The offering was accepted, and she took refuge in the bosom of the Father. There she experienced sweetly that she had really received a visit from Him who came down from heaven in mercy and truth.

Another source of disquiet for holy souls is the fear that

they may have forgotten some sin in making their confession. St. John, to whom our Lord had confided the care of Gertrude, deigned to reassure her on this point. She confessed to him that her fear prevented her approaching to our Lord when she had forgotten some sins, even if they were slight, as she could not always have a confessor, and she was afraid of forgetting them altogether. St. John kindly consoled her, and said: "Fear not, daughter; you wish to confess all your sins and would gladly find a confessor if possible. While in these dispositions all the faults of which you do not accuse yourself, because you have forgotten them, appear in the eyes of our Lord in your soul as precious stones; they will only make you appear more beautiful in the sight of the heavenly court."

Some pious people are troubled because they cannot go to confession as often as they would wish. Let them imitate St. Gertrude. Examining her conscience one day, she noticed something she would have liked to confess. But there being no confessor, she took refuge as usual with her only Consoler, our Lord. Sighing deeply, she told Him her trouble. Our Lord replied: "Why art thou troubled, My beloved? Whenever thou hast need I, the eternal Priest, will renew the Sacramental grace in thy soul more efficaciously than any priest or pontiff could do; I will baptize thee in My precious blood; I will confirm thee in My triumphant power; I will enfold thee in My faithful love; I will sanctify thee by My perfect and most holy life; I will deliver thee from all attachment to sin by My tender and loving mercy. In My overflowing charity, I will nourish thee with Myself, and I will in My turn possess thee in Me; in the sweetness of My spirit I will penetrate thy spirit with so sweet an unction that thy devotion will overflow from all thy senses and in all thy actions, and in this way I will dispose of thee always and sanctify thee unto eternal life."

CHAPTER LIX

THE SOUL IS PURIFIED FROM ITS STAINS BY LOVE

ST. GERTRUDE'S soul, so anxious to please our Lord, would have wished never to commit the smallest sin, or, at least, to be able to be cleansed at once from the stains inevitable to our human nature. "Teach me, my good Master," she said, "how I may be purified from the stains I may contract." Our Lord replied: "Do not let them remain in thee; as soon as thou dost perceive a fault say with a fervent heart, 'Have mercy on me, O God,' or this prayer: 'O Lord Jesus, my only salvation, grant me by Thy holy death the forgiveness of all my sins.'"

One day during Mass she remembered some faults she had committed, and as she had been favoured with special graces she felt afraid. "O Lord," she cried to her Well-Beloved, "who givest Thyself with so much generosity, how couldst Thou grant such great consolations and favours to a person so unworthy and so unprepared as I am?" Our Lord replied: "My love compelled Me." She continued: "Where are the stains made by the impatience I had in my heart a while ago, and which I showed more or less by my words?" "Divine fire," said our Lord, "has consumed them; I always efface all the stains which disfigure a soul towards which I incline, urged thereto solely by my goodness. Why dost thou complain of thy negligences? Thou art clothed with the glorious mantle of charity which covereth a multitude of sins" (St. Peter). St. Gertrude replied: "How can I rejoice at seeing my faults covered by charity if I am still stained?" Our Lord answered: "Charity does not only cover sins,

but as a burning ray from the sun it consumes and destroys all venial faults, filling the soul with merit."

Gertrude wished specially to know one thing. "Lord," she said, "as notwithstanding my unworthiness Thou hast so often prevented me with Thy graces, I would wish to know whether my soul will be purified from these slight faults before or after my death." Our Lord, in His Goodness, seemed not to hear, so she continued: "In truth, Lord, if Thy justice exacts it, I would myself go down to the depths of hell to give Thee a more worthy satisfaction. But if Thy goodness and mercy are more glorified by these faults being consumed by Thy love, I beg that Thy Love may purify my soul from all its stains, far beyond my merits." Our Lord, with His usual goodness and loving-kindness, granted this request, so marvellous is His condescension.

CHAPTER LX

THE TROUBLES OF HOLY COMMUNION

IN His infinite mercy the Heart of Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist to consummate in an ineffable mystery His union with our souls. To this miracle of love objections were raised from the beginning and have been repeated throughout the centuries. The gross Jews found the saying hard, to give His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. Protestants declared it impossible: they flatly denied the Real Presence. The Jansenists had the Faith, but they wished to keep Holy Communion for the perfect only. Even holy souls, frightened at the thought of the greatness of the Gift, allowed themselves to be blinded by their own unworthiness. Too often by an exaggerated fear or by false humility they abstained from Holy Communion. How many Communions are omitted through this illusion. What a sorrow for the Sacred Heart!

St. Gertrude had also this excessive fear of her unworthiness when there was question of Holy Communion. In the monastery of Helfta many other religious had the same difficulty. Our divine Lord disapproved very much of this pusillanimity. He even gave to Gertrude the task of dissipating the fears and scruples of those who consulted her. Let us hear how she expresses her confusion and gratitude to our Lord:

" May my heart and my soul, my entire body, with all its senses and all my powers, corporal and spiritual, and with me may all creatures thank and glorify Thee, O my good God, for Thy condescension and mercy. Thy loving-kindness was not satisfied in seeming content when so badly prepared I approached the holy banquet of Thy Body and Blood, but Thou wouldst in Thy divine

liberality add this new privilege to the gifts Thou hadst already given to the vilest and most useless of Thy creatures. By Thy grace I have received an assurance for all persons who desire to receive Holy Communion, but who are deterred by the fears of a timorous conscience, that when they shall come with humility, seeking strength from me, the last of Thy servants, by Thy inexhaustible love, and in reward for their humility, Thou wilt judge them fit to receive this great Sacrament, and they shall do so with fruit for their eternal salvation. Thou didst add that if my justice did not allow me to find a person fit to communicate, Thou wouldst never allow that person again to humble himself by asking my advice.

"O God, supreme Lord and Master, who dwelleth in inaccessible heights and deignest to look on the lowly, what thought didst Thou have in Thy mercy in seeing me, so unworthy, approach this Sacrament so often, and so deserve from Thy justice a severe sentence? Thou wouldst doubtless make those others worthy by their humility. Thou couldst have done it much better without me, but from some consideration of my poverty Thy goodness decreed to do it by me and so to make me share in the merits of those who followed my advice and produced fruits of salvation."

So we learn from Gertrude herself that she had received the gift of dispelling the fears which so often torment timid souls when preparing for Holy Communion. She did not receive this gift only for the days of her pilgrimage here below, but she still has it in heaven.

May, therefore, the privileged spouse of the Sacred Heart herself instruct us and remove the obstacles which prevent us from pouring our hearts out to our Well-Beloved at the precious moment of receiving Holy Communion.

CHAPTER LXI

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

THE soul must therefore prepare itself for Holy Communion, but without anxiety. One day when Gertrude wished to go to Holy Communion she did not feel herself sufficiently prepared; as it was nearly time to go, she said to her soul: "Behold thy Spouse calls thee; how canst thou go to meet Him unadorned by the graces necessary to receive Him worthily." Then, considering further her unworthiness, she saw she could in no way rely on her own merits, so she placed all her confidence in the goodness of God. "Of what use is it to wait," she said, "if I strove to prepare myself for a thousand years I should still be unprepared! I can find nothing in myself, no matter how small a thing, that could make me ready. I will therefore go to Him humbly and confidently, and when our Lord sees me from afar coming to meet Him for love of His Sacred Heart, He can easily send me all that is necessary to prepare me to appear properly adorned before His face." She then arose in those dispositions, keeping her eyes fixed on her own sinfulness and imperfect dispositions.

When she had advanced a little, our Lord appeared to her. He looked at her with compassion, or rather with tenderness. In order to prepare her He sent before Him His innocence, with which she clothed herself as with a white garment. As it was her humility which made her unite herself with souls who were unworthy, she was also covered with a purple garment. Our Lord then sent His hope, which makes Him sigh for the embrace of the soul, and was as a green garment for her. Then He sent the love of His Heart, which was to be a mantle of gold for her; His joy, which causes Him to find His pleasure

in a soul, was to be a crown of precious stones for her. He then gave her, as shoes, His confidence, which makes Him lean on the vile clay of human fragility and find His delight in being with the children of men. So, beautifully adorned, Gertrude was able to present herself before our Lord.

Here we see our Lord's virtues adorning the soul. St. Paul, in one of his epistles, shows them to us as weapons.

Another time, the bell had rung for Holy Communion and the singing already commenced. Gertrude, not feeling herself sufficiently prepared, said to our Lord: "Behold, Lord, Thou comest to me; as Thou canst do it, why hast Thou not sent before Thee the ornaments I need? I should have adorned myself with them so that I might appear more becomingly before Thee." Our Lord replied: "I sometimes take more pleasure in the virtue of humility than in the feeling of devotion." She therefore received our Lord, and when she had returned to her place she said: "Invited to Thy banquet, I came giving thanks." Our Lord replied: "I wished for thee with all My Heart." "But, Lord," said Gertrude, "what glory can be given to Thy Heart that it can so rejoice to see me with my unworthy teeth crush Thy holy and immaculate Sacraments?" Our Lord replied: "The love we have for a friend causes us to find pleasure in all he says, so My love makes Me feel in My elect great joy which they feel not themselves."

Again, Gertrude was going to leave the chapel before the Communion, from the fear of not being sufficiently well prepared; but Jesus came to meet her and, taking her apart, prepared her Himself. It seemed to her that first He washed her hands to efface her sins, and for this He caused her to participate in the expiation of His Passion. Then, taking off the ornaments He wore, He gave them to Gertrude, and warned her that, thus clothed

she should behave discreetly and not as a fool. By this last word He designated every soul who, after having implored the Son of God to make good her imperfections by His infinite merits, has not full and entire confidence in Him. Our Lord not only went to meet St. Gertrude, He deigned to communicate in her place.

One day she was more anxious than usual not to receive Holy Communion through her unworthiness. She begged our Lord Himself to receive the Sacred Host for her. In approaching His Holy Body she inhaled His divine breath from time to time so far as her weakness could bear. She rested on the breast of our Lord, hidden under His arm, and placed so that her left side rested on the wound of the Sacred Heart. Soon afterwards she perceived that a red scar was visibly imprinted over her heart, through contact with the love wound on our Lord's holy side. When she went to receive Holy Communion she saw our Lord receive the Sacred Host into His divine mouth. It passed through His breast and came out by the wound in His side and remained there. Then our Lord said: "This Host will unite us. It will hide thy scar and cover My wound. It will thus cure us both."

Encouraged by so many sweet invitations, she went with full confidence in future to receive this Sacrament of Love, and often her heart was full of the purest joy at having responded to the invitations of the Sacred Heart.

"If thou dost prepare thyself to-day to receive the Sacrament of My Body and Blood I will grant thee a favour: thou shalt enjoy the sweetness of My love, thy soul shall melt in the furnace of My divinity, and thou shalt be united to Me as gold and silver are united in the crucible. From henceforth thou shalt possess a precious mixture which thou canst worthily offer to God the Father for His eternal praise."

Convinced by these words, Gertrude was inflamed with

an immense desire for Holy Communion. To receive this Sacrament it would not have seemed hard for her to run between naked swords. She therefore went to receive our Lord and, in her thanksgiving, the Sacred Heart said to her: "To-day thou hast chosen to serve Me with My other servants in carrying straw, mortar, and bricks; but I have chosen thee to sit at My royal table and feast on the most delicious food." And as the same day another person had abstained, without due reason, from Holy Communion, Gertrude said to our Lord: "Why, O merciful God, didst Thou allow her to be so tempted?" "Why blame Me," said our Lord, "if this person has so covered herself with the veil of her unworthiness that she no longer sees all the tenderness of My paternal affection?" Taught in the school of the Sacred Heart, Gertrude thanked our Lord profoundly for having helped her to overcome her exaggerated fears. "I thank Thee, O God, my Well-Beloved, for having called me to a state of life where neither my relatives nor anything else can prevent me from taking part in Thy delicious banquet."

To this thanksgiving our Lord replied with His usual kindness: "Thou dost acknowledge that there is nothing to keep thee from Me. I wish that thou shouldst also know that there is nothing either in heaven or on the earth, not even the severity of My judgments or My justice, which can prevent Me doing thee good to the great joy of My divine Heart."

CHAPTER LXII

AGAINST THOSE WHO ABSTAIN FROM HOLY COMMUNION

A PERSON once, actuated by zeal, felt indignant with some others whom she thought insufficiently prepared and not very pious, and who yet received Holy Communion. She even publicly reproached them with this, so that some were afraid and dared no longer communicate. When Gertrude was praying for this severe person she asked our Lord what He thought of her conduct.

Our Lord replied: "My delights are to be with the children of men. Through love I have left them this Sacrament to remind them of Me, so that from it they might draw and keep a faithful remembrance; by it I have entered into an alliance with those who are faithful to Me until the end of the world. This being so, he who by his words or remarks shall prevent a person who is not in mortal sin from receiving Me, hinders or suspends the delight I feel in going to that soul. He is like a too severe tutor engaged in teaching the son of a king, who would forbid the young prince enjoying himself with companions of his own age on the plea that they were neither noble nor rich. This tutor acts so believing that it is better for the child to enjoy the honour of his rank than to play games with companions of his own age." Gertrude then said: "If this person intends in future to avoid these remarks, wilt Thou not forgive her all the faults she has committed in this way in the past?" Our Lord answered: "Not only will I forgive her, but her resolution will be very pleasing to Me. I shall be as happy as the young prince if his tutor of his own will

brought his young friends to play with him after having driven them away."

What admirable teaching! Our Lord would strengthen it in His spouse, who was always too ready to believe in her own unworthiness. A preacher had spoken severely on the justice of God. Gertrude, terrified by his sermon, dared not approach Holy Communion. But God in His goodness deigned to encourage her. "See," He said, "the small vessel in which I dwell in order to go to thee. Be assured that the rigour of My justice is as much restrained by the sweetness of My mercy. I offer men a very striking example of this in this Sacrament. Consider also the morsel of bread under which I offer thee My divinity and humanity; compare its dignity with that of the human body, and learn to appreciate the condescension of My goodness. As much as the human body surpasses in dignity the species of bread, so much am I drawn to men by the mercy and love of My heart in this Sacrament. I will have it so, so that the loving soul may have power over Me."

Still, through humility and discretion, it is allowable to abstain from Holy Communion. Gertrude through advice from her Abbess had done so. She offered our Lord this privation. Jesus received her lovingly into His arms, treating her as a mother who carries her child. He said to her: "As thou didst abstain from receiving Me solely for love of Me, I will warm thee on My Heart." When the community went to receive Holy Communion our Lord caused Gertrude to rest with loving tenderness on the wound of His holy side, saying to her: "As from discretion thou dost abstain to-day from receiving Me corporally in the Sacrament of the Altar, drink spiritually from My divine Heart of the flowing stream of My divinity."

Gertrude therefore quenched her thirst at this torrent

of divine happiness. She then said: "Lord, if he who omits to receive Holy Communion receives so great graces, it would be better to omit than to receive it." Our Lord replied: "That is not so, for he who, for love, and to glorify Me, receives the Sacrament possesses really My deified Body and the delicious sweetness of My divinity. Over and above that, he is adorned with the splendid and incomparable ornaments of my divine virtues." "What, then, shall befall those," she asked, "who through their own fault are deprived of Holy Communion and who take advantage on that day of giving way to all kinds of frivolity and carelessness?" Our Lord replied: "He who neglects to prepare his soul to receive Me, and omits doing so in order to do more freely what he wishes, renders himself more unworthy of Me."

Christian souls, be not deceived by the pretext of thinking yourselves unworthy, nor by the indolence which rejects every effort to prepare. The Sacred Heart burns with desire to give itself to us. Let us make ourselves more and more worthy to receive it, and we shall give Him great honour, as the following will show. On Maundy Thursday, a little before Communion, our Lord appeared to St. Gertrude. He was not seated, but stretched on the ground, utterly spent, and brought so low that, seeing Him, Gertrude was so interiorly moved as nearly to lose consciousness. While she considered Him in this miserable state, stretched on the ground, she saw the priest raise Him, though our Lord was very tall and carried the universe on His powerful Arm. She understood that the faintness she had noticed in the Almighty Son of God showed the victorious strength of His sweetest love.

In commenting on a verse of the Psalms she said: "Our Benjamin, the sweet Jesus, was stretched out in ecstasy

through the power of His love; He was at the height of His joy as being about to unite Himself in the Holy Communion to souls who were so dear to Him. So, being unconscious and unable to use His strength, through the vehemence of His love, He allowed Himself to be raised and carried by the priest."

CHAPTER LXIII

THE EFFECTS OF HOLY COMMUNION

WHY has the Heart of Jesus so great a desire to unite Himself to us in the Holy Communion? His love alone can explain it. He wishes to enrich us with His gifts, or rather to make us live by His life. Once, after receiving Holy Communion, Gertrude was profoundly recollected. Our Lord appeared to her under the form of a pelican, which opened its breast with its beak, as one generally sees it represented. Filled with admiration, she said: "What dost Thou wish to teach me, Lord, by this vision?" "I wish," replied our Lord, "that thou shouldst consider how much I must be urged by love to offer so precious a gift. If I might so speak, I would prefer to endure anything after having given Myself rather than to refuse to give Myself to a loving soul. Consider again this admirable mystery: thy soul in receiving this gift is filled with life which shall last for ever, as the young of the pelican receive life from its blood."

In another vision St. Gertrude explains to us by a different comparison the marvellous effects of Holy Communion, which substitutes the life of Jesus for ours. One day at the moment in which she was going to receive Holy Communion, she looked upon herself as a little plant, which, notwithstanding the blessings of the divine Heart, was withering hour by hour through its sins and negligences. She prayed our Lord to take pity on her, and at once she saw Him draw her to Him by the sweet attraction of His pierced Heart. He washed her in the water and then sprinkled her with the blood which came from His Heart. This care caused the little withered plant to revive and changed it into a flourishing tree.

Then the Son of God, taking this tree, offered it to the Most Holy Trinity, and God the Father fastened to its highest branches the fruits it would have produced had Gertrude been more faithful in co-operating with grace. God the Son and the Holy Spirit did the same for the lower branches. After Holy Communion it seemed to St. Gertrude that divine virtue poured through the wound of the Sacred Heart as sap passes through a root to spread from the branches into the fruits and leaves. This wonderful sap was the sanctity of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, so that the fruits of His life on earth took in it a new brightness, as gold or silver flowing through crystal.

The soul is itself transformed by Holy Communion even to its most profound depths. Gertrude, having one day received the Body of our Lord, saw her own soul transparent and white as snow, shining like crystal. The divinity of Jesus Christ which she had just received seemed miraculously enclosed in this crystal as gold, which shone through. The divinity produced in her such great, admirable, and inconceivable things, and filled her with great happiness, so that the adorable Trinity and all the Saints were filled with joy, which made her understand better the meaning of those words: "There is no spiritual loss which cannot be repaired by the worthy reception of the body of Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER LXIV

ON FREQUENT COMMUNION

OUR dear Lord finds an indescribable joy in listening to the outpourings of a soul that has just received Him in Holy Communion. He deigned to explain this Himself to St. Gertrude when she was preparing for death.

She asked Him: "When wilt Thou vouchsafe, O my faithful Lord, to conduct me from the exile of this prison to my blessed rest?" Our Lord answered: "Does a betrothed who is much praised by those around her complain of delay when in the meanwhile her fiancé shows her marks of his tender love?" "What canst Thou," said St. Gertrude, "find in me, vile refuse of the earth, that could be pleasing to Thee and cause Thee to show me marks of Thy love?" Our Lord answered: "The communication between us two by the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, which can take place no more after this life, has more charms for Me than men find in all their kisses and embraces. These tokens of love vanish after a while, while the charm which exists in the love which unites us in Holy Communion never passes away nor grows feeble, but the more often it is renewed the stronger and more vigorous it grows."

Pious people have the custom of offering their Holy Communions for each other—our Lord Himself approved of this interchange of prayers and petitions.

One day when Gertrude was going to communicate she said to our Lord: "I offer Thee now, Lord, the requests of all those who have recommended themselves to my unworthy prayers." "Thou hast," our Lord replied, "enkindled in My Heart as many flames of love as the number of persons prayed for.

"If thou wishest it, thou mayst do it in four ways: (1) praise Me for the creation of all those whom I have made to My image and likeness; (2) thank Me for the graces granted to them in the past and all that shall be given to them in the future; (3) be sorrowful and do penance for all the obstacles they have placed to the working of My grace; (4) pray for all those who, according to the disposition of My Providence, work at their own perfection in doing good for My honour and glory."

CHAPTER LXV

ON FREQUENT COMMUNION, AND TO WHAT IT OBLIGES US

ONE day when Gertrude was about to receive Holy Communion she said to our Lord: "What wilt Thou give me, Lord?" "Myself, entirely, with all My gifts, such as My Virgin Mother received Me." "What, then," said St. Gertrude, "shall I have more than they who yesterday received Thee with me, but who abstain from receiving Thee to-day, since Thou always givest Thyself entirely?" "In olden times," our Lord replied, "he who had been twice in an honourable post was more respected than he who had only once been so placed; with more reason shall he have greater glory in eternal life who has received the oftener on earth."

Gertrude then said, sighing: "How much, then, shall priests be exalted above me in glory, since through their priesthood they communicate every day?" "There will certainly," replied our Lord, "be given great glory to those who receive Me worthily, but there is a great difference between a soul which places all its joy in Holy Communion and one who only seeks honour in celebrating the Holy Mysteries. There is one reward for those who approach Me with love and desire, and another for those who receive Me with fear and trembling. There is yet another for those who prepare to receive Me by devotional practices, but neither one nor the other reward shall be given to him who only celebrates Mass from custom."

Therefore the Holy Mass must be celebrated and Holy Communion received with love and desire, fear and trembling, and with the devout preparation by which we shall obtain the rewards of the Sacred Heart.

Among pious people detraction is unhappily a common fault. The tongue that in the morning received the Saviour of the world is sometimes employed all day in destroying the reputation of others. Our Lord complained of this to His well-beloved spouse. She was reflecting one morning, after Holy Communion, on the care that should be taken to guard the tongue, because it has the singular honour of receiving on itself the Body of our Lord, when this Divine Master instructed her by this comparison: "If anyone does not refrain from lying, shameful, or detracting words, and receives Holy Communion without having done penance, he receives, as far as depends on him, Jesus Christ as one would receive a guest by showering stones on him which had been gathered on the threshold of his home, or in giving him blows on the head."

Let him who reads this reflect sorrowfully on the manifestation of so much cruelty on the one hand and so much loving-kindness on the other, when He who comes with so much compassion to save men is so cruelly persecuted by those He comes to save. And the same may be applied to other sins.

CHAPTER LXVI

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

(ABRIDGED BY OMITTING PRAYERS)

ST. GERTRUDE had composed an exercise of preparation for death. This magnificent meditation has nothing in common with those sometimes written in books for a monthly retreat. In our days death is too often considered only from its sorrowful side: separation from family, from riches, the breaking of ties with friends and relatives; the supreme agony and all its horrors, the judgment with all the fears it inspires. The soul goes through this exercise with repugnance and leaves it with fear and trembling.

The exercise composed by St. Gertrude is very different, and very different are its effects in the soul. As Dom Guéranger says: "She there teaches the soul to seek the cure for all its wounds, the satisfaction for all its sins, in the Passion of our Saviour, and no longer to see the chastisement of death through which it is to pass, excepting through the death of the Redeemer." Such an exercise, thinks the gentle Benedictine, should produce great confidence, because it leads to divine love. You may make it your ambassador to the Father of Mercy to appease His justice and to obtain from Him that He would deign to draw out of the treasure of the Passion of His well-beloved Son a sum sufficient to pay the debt of your sins, even to your last sin of negligence. In this way your confidence will be strengthened that you will have a happy death, and you will have reason to hope that your sins will be entirely blotted out.

In this exercise Gertrude makes the soul appear at each of the seven canonical hours before one of the divine perfections which are exercised on men when living.

The guilty soul is accused by its sins, but divine love intervenes and becomes its defender. Through this intervention the soul gains its cause before each of the divine perfections.

At Matins.

The soul appears before God. Mercy and love are at its side. The hour of Matins corresponds to the hour in the Passion when our Lord was arrested and loaded with chains. Love also placed its hand on the Man-God and begged for this noble Captive.

At Prime.

The soul must appear before Eternal Truth. Love will defend it. The hour of Prime corresponds to that in which our Saviour was dragged from one judge to another.

At Terce.

At the hour of Terce the soul stands face to face with divine Peace, and begs it to be with it at the hour of death. The hour of Terce corresponds to that in which our Lord was scourged.

At Sext.

At the hour of Sext the soul must stand before divine Wisdom, and beg that, through the merits of our Lord's Cross, it may be delivered from the snares of the Devil. The hour of Sext corresponds to that of the Crucifixion.

At None.

At the hour of None we must beg that divine Goodness and holy Love may unite our death with that of our Lord. The hour of None corresponds to that in which Jesus expired.

At Vespers.

At Vespers let the soul supplicate the divine Compassion and strive to obtain its pity for its miserable state.

At Compline.

At Compline the soul should beg the grace of Perseverance and to be faithful to Jesus until death. This time corresponds to that in which Jesus was laid in the tomb.

On the same day on which you make this reparation for your sins you must beg of our Lord to allow you to enter into the shady garden of His divine Heart. There you will wash seven times, like Naaman, in the Jordan—that is to say, in the merits of His life and Passion, so that entirely purified from your sins before the day of your death your soul may be beautiful and deserve to be introduced into the Sanctuary of His love.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE POWER OF ST. GERTRUDE WITH THE SACRED HEART

DURING St. Gertrude's life our Lord had granted her six special privileges, and promised her a seventh after her death.

The first was the power to dissipate the doubts of timid souls in approaching Holy Communion.

The second was being able to see faults, and to know how they were to be cured.

The third was our Lord's engagement to ratify all the promises she had made in His name.

The fourth was the assurance given by our Lord that He would grant the requests of those who had recommended themselves to her prayers.

The fifth was to enlighten and console souls by her spiritual advice.

The sixth was the reward He would give to all who had prayed for her.

The last privilege, which she now enjoys in heaven, is the power of her intercession. This last is of special interest to us.

"Through Thy great generosity, O God of goodness, Thou hast granted me this favour. After my death, if any shall consider with what condescension Thou didst in Thy love look on my lowliness, and if for this reason they should recommend themselves humbly to my prayers, unworthy as they are, Thou hast promised to hear them. They must, however, in reparation for negligences, thank Thee humbly for five particular graces:

"(1) For Thy gratuitous love and goodness, which predestined me from all eternity to be Thine.

"(2) That Thou hast drawn me to Thee that I might be saved.

"(3) That Thou hast intimately united me to Thyself.

"(4) That Thou wouldst find Thy delight in my soul. This grace I attribute, if I may so speak, to the strength of Thy love.

"(5) That Thou hast deigned to consummate my happiness.

"To all these favours, Thy goodness, O my God, has deigned to add that of confirming them in this way. One day as I was thinking them over in my mind, I compared my hardness with Thy tenderness, of which the infinite superabundance fills me with joy, and I came to such a height of presumption as to complain that Thou hadst not confirmed Thy promise by placing Thy hand in mine, as those do who make another a promise. Thy loving-kindness undertook to satisfy this desire, and Thou didst say: 'To prevent thy complaints come and receive the confirmation of My promise.' And at once, in the depth of my lowliness, I saw the ark of divine fidelity and truth, Thy most Holy Heart, held open with Thy two hands, and perverse as I was, like the Jews, who always asked for prodigies and miracles, I was told to stretch out my hand. Then, closing the wound in which my hand was held, Thou didst say: 'Behold, then, I promise to keep faithfully the graces I have given thee. Yet, if according to the decrees of My Providence I have sometimes to suspend their effect, I promise afterwards to repay thee threefold. I promise on the part of the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the most Holy Trinity, with whom I live and reign, true God, for ever and ever.'"

St. Gertrude's memory, after her death, was, according to St. John's prediction to herself, to revive in the hearts of many and draw many souls to God, finding in Him their happiness. How many souls have obtained priceless graces through the loving spouse of the divine Heart!

How much darkness of conscience has been dissipated, to give place to peace and hope, in the soul! But, above all, how many souls have been inflamed with love for the Heart of Jesus? This last grace is the one we most desire and we earnestly beg for through her powerful intercession. May she offer Him her own heart in our behalf, may He by the love which led Him to promise to use her as a channel through which He would pour His blessings on all those who should implore her help, deign now to fulfil His promise for His glory and our salvation.

CHAPTER LXVIII

CONCLUSION

ON St. Bernard's Feast St. Mechtilde heard the choir at Mass singing in his honour *In medio Ecclesiæ*. The beloved servant of God asked herself what those words might mean. Our Lord, whose eyes are ever turned towards His elect, enlightened her mind, saying to her: "The centre of the Church is the Order of St. Benedict. It is like a pillar on which the whole fabric rests, for in the Church of God it has some communication with all the orders composing it. To the Pope and prelates it renders respect and obedience; to the religious it offers instruction and the rules to lead a perfect life; for all other Orders imitate this Order in some point. The just find in it counsel and help; sinners compassion, correction, and absolution in the confessional; souls in purgatory holy prayers. Strangers find hospitality, the poor alms, the sick healing, those who hunger and thirst food and drink, those in sadness consolation, and the souls in purgatory deliverance."

In this centre our Lord opened St. Bernard's mouth, which He had specially prevented with His choice blessings. The Holy Spirit so filled him with His strength that, like an impetuous wind, which bursts open a door, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he spread abroad with the fire of charity the doctrine with which he was divinely inspired, and enlightened the whole Church.

We may add in this centre our Lord also opened the mouths of both St. Mechtilde and St. Gertrude, which He had also specially blessed. Both received from our Lord the complete revelation of the prerogatives of His Sacred Heart. The light which in these latter times was to enlighten the world, the fire that was to warm its

numbed members, were entrusted to the children of this patriarch. This precious treasure was confided to them as a deposit until the day when divine Providence will give it to the whole Church and not only to the perfect.

Could not the vision which St. Gertrude had on the Feast of St. Gregory be explained in the sense of this restriction? She saw the holy Pontiff bending his knees, raising his hands, and supplicating our Lord to have pity on the Church. Our Lord opened to him His divine Heart with a sweet patience, so that he might take without stint whatever he thought necessary for the Church and distribute it all around. The Saint plunged both hands into the divine Heart to draw out divine consolations, and prepared to dispense them over the whole earth, when our Lord seemed to gird St. Gregory with a brilliant golden girdle. This ornament signified that divine justice up to then restrained this precious effusion of grace, and had prevented it reaching the earth, so that it might not be given to those who were unworthy or ungrateful; but those who wished to receive it were to raise themselves up by the fervour of their desires, and so deserve to receive it. St. Gregory's girdle was loosened in the seventeenth century by our Lord Himself, and now His justice does not refuse His treasures to the imperfect. His mercy has once again triumphed and called the whole human race to the sacred fountains of the Saviour—above all, to that of His adorable Heart. St. Benedict's children will retain their treasure and continue to live in solitude, prayer, study, and manual work, but the missionaries of the world will ask from them the Light of the Church and the flames from the sacred furnace of love.

CHAPTER LXIX

OFFERING OF THIS BOOK

BEHOLD, Lord, the sweetness that has flowed from Thy gratuitous goodness, from Thy Heart full of Love, urged by the mighty influence of Thy inexhaustible kindness. Its waters have flowed to fertilize and make fruitful, to draw and unite to Thyself the heart and soul of Thy chosen one, in an indissoluble manner. O Lord Jesus, to Thee, who art the source of eternal light, I offer it, with the love of all human hearts, in union with that great charity which made Thee, the only Son of the Most High, labour to bring back from its original abyss, by the offering of a perfect gratitude, human nature clothed with Thy divinity, and come to us in Thy deified humanity.

I beg of Thee, as Thou hast inspired me with the desires and affections of all creatures, to cause these waters to return to Thee by the sweet breath of Thy Holy Spirit, so that they may be to Thee an eternal and immutable act of praise. May this book be to the praise of the supreme power of the Father, may it please Thee in Thy inscrutable wisdom and knowledge, and may it be pleasing to the sweet and ineffable goodness of the Holy Ghost. May it be a thank-offering worthy of all the joy Thou hast given, givest, and shalt give for ever to the hearts and souls of those who receive it, and to all those who, until the end of the world, submissive to Thy Word, shall through it receive any inspiration, consolation, or instruction, and for all who receive these gifts and whom Thou, my God, shalt see are well disposed.

I offer it to repair all the faults committed through my poor intellect, want of zeal and experience, and through not having used the graces Thou didst give to me in a

manner worthy of Thee, nor for my neighbour's good. I offer it to expiate all the insults which (may Thy mercy forbid) may be offered through this book, either through contempt, human frailty, or diabolical suggestion, to Thy gratuitous goodness, shining so clearly in these pages. I offer it with the desire of obtaining all the graces that the love and gratitude of Thy Heart will give to those who, through love for Thy love, wish to read this book with a humble devotion and affectionate gratitude, and who try to practise its teaching through respect for Him from whom it comes.

Lastly, I offer it in thanksgiving, O God of my heart, for Thy incomprehensible goodness in having deigned to choose me to work at such a noble and sublime work. I, a vile atom, or rather the refuse of the world, my misery preventing me from doing anything in return for this choice, I offer Thee Thy sweet Heart, the only Gift worthy of Thee, with its immense and incalculable riches; the only excellent gift, with its divine gratitude and the unlimited perfection of its beatitude.

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